



*by Mo Xiang*

# Advent of the Archmage



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# **Advent of the Archmage**

– Descent of the God of Magic –

**- Volume 1 -**

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**[ Nyoibo Studio (Qidian International) ]**

## - STORY -

Link was the top Archmage in the entire server. He had just defeated the strongest boss, the Lord of The Deep, Nozama with his party. However, instead of going back to town, he was transported to a secret location with pixelated CG.

It sort of felt like a vacuum, and within it came a glorious and commanding voice that calls himself the God of Light.

“Link, would you be willing to be the saviour who will pull the World of Firuman out from the churning abyss?”

What a huge mission! If it was in the real world, Link would have rejected it immediately. However, he was bent on being the hero in game.

“Bring it on!” Link answered confidently.

“Then, best of luck.”

And so begin Link’s journey of magic, friendship, betrayal, love and despair in the ever changing World of Firuman.





# 法神降临

游戏

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# Chapter 1

## "Legend" in the Flesh

It was a cold night.

Towards the North, in the northwest corner of a little city called Gladstone, sat the Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. In the darkest corner on the third floor of its Apprentice Dorm stood room 309.

Blankets were thrown up in a flurry. A black-haired, thin and frail-looking young man sat up with a jolt. The moonlight shone in through the glass window panes, casting a pale white sheen onto his face.

Am I really in the World of Firuman now? A world of darkness, dying gods, that bloody night, the flashing magical lights, saving the world? Was that all real?

The young man's head was in chaos. Utter chaos.

His name was Link. He was from Earth. At least, he had been, up until just an hour ago.

Just recently, he was still in his own home on Earth, playing the game Legend.

Legend had been the most popular online virtual reality game on Earth. It was about a world in a tragic state, slowly being taken over by the Dark Side. In the game, he had been the first ever Archmage, as well as the head Magician of its largest guild: The Guild of Starry Dreams. Just before this, he had challenged the game's Ultimate Boss—the Lord of the Deep, Nozama.

Nozama was a mighty Demi-God. He was one of the three overlords of the Dark Army in the Mortal Realm. Link's battle with Nozama had been an arduous one. Of his team of more than a hundred and ten players, only Link was left standing. By that time, Nozama had worn down his health to the point of almost finishing him off.

Towards the end, Link unlocked the God-level item, the Archangel's Sword. Immense power surged through him, and he became temporarily invincible for five seconds.

In those five seconds, Link and the frenzied boss clashed, each using three Fingers of Death on each other!

## Finger of Death

### Level-19 Legendary Spell

Effect: When it hits a target, it will carry out divine judgment (magical judgment) according to the condition of the target's body. There is a very large chance that it will cause the target to experience sudden death!

(The version used by the game player is Basic. It can only be used when the Boss' health is below a certain level.)

The scary thing about this spell was that it judged its targets regardless of their skill level. If the spell's judgment was successful, even a God would be killed on the spot!

Link and Nozama's Fingers of Death activated at the same time. They both had literally fought each other to their deaths.

Strangely enough, Link's avatar hadn't been resurrected at the graveyard. Instead, it entered a dark, eerie dimension.

In this dimension, there was a luminescent but dim ball of light. It claimed to be the God of Light hailing from the Legion of Light, a realm in the World of Firuman far away on the verge of defeat. As its supreme God, his powers had been weakened to the point of death, and he begged Link to save his beloved World of Firuman.

Link just listened. Who could believe such a ridiculous thing as saving a world?

He thought that this was a cut scene that had been activated by slaying the Ultimate Boss. Full of pride after having just slain the boss, Link had somehow actually agreed to the God's plea. This caused him to be banished to this godforsaken, wretched place!

Under the silver moonlight, Link looked about and was able to make out the room around him.

The room was neither large nor small, 100 or so square feet. By the window were a distinctively foreign-looking bookshelf and chair. A single bed had been placed against the wall, and at the head of the bed, there was a storage chest. That was all.

There were three books on the bookshelf. Link found that he could recognize their names very quickly: Elemental Magic, The World's Equilibrium, and Light and Dark. All of them were basic learning materials from the academy's library.

More memories began flooding into his head. This body had also been called Link. It was the youngest son of a small baron in the Eastern Dunes of the Norton Kingdom. He was 17 this year, introverted and taciturn. He had only learned an extremely basic Trick (Level-0 Apprentice Spell) throughout his half a year in the Magic Academy –The Magician's Hand.

He was a hermit in the academy. Almost no one noticed him.

But none of that was relevant now.

Jumping down from the bed, without even bothering to put on any shoes, Link strode over to the calendar hanging by the table. Clearly inscribed on the calendar of vellum was today's date.

The Light Ages: The Year 1056, the 9th Day of the 10th Month.

Link gasped. It seemed to be just a normal day, but after today, it would be carved into the history of the World of Firuman for all eternity!

Because late tonight, the vanguard of the Dark Elves would succeed in ambushing Gladstone City. They would follow it up with the atrocious massacre of the whole city – 150,000 people would be wiped out within a day and a night, their souls sacrificed to the Dark Elves' goddess, the Spider Queen, Lolth. There would be less than 1000 survivors.

After the sacrificial ritual, the corpses would be thrown into the Gladstone River beside the city. The river would nearly be cut off by the dam of corpses, the water stained red with blood.

Gladstone was reduced to rubble that night.

This incident was known as The Change of the Bloody Moon!

Soon, a war swept over the entire World of Firuman. The Dark Ages had arrived. Twenty years later, there were still no signs of it ending anytime soon. In fact, it only seemed to have gotten worse.

All this had been a part of the background history of the game Legend. After comparing what he knew with the memories of his body, Link realized that this world he was in was almost identical to the world in Legend.

The only difference was the time—it had been the year 1076 in the game. The Legion of Light had been on the retreat, losing more battles than winning, its territory steadily shrinking. There had also been constant internal squabbles leaving it in extremely poor condition. Now, the world was just about to face the beginning of the disaster.

The Change of the Bloody Moon would happen tonight!

Cold to his core, Link turned to see a pocket watch lying on the chest by the bed. He rushed over and picked it up. It had been made by the dwarves. Opening it, the watch hands glowed in the dark, he could tell the time very easily. It was 9:35 at night.

"There's less than an hour! The Dark Elves' attack will start soon!" Link thought, his heartbeat quickening.

This night, the Dark Elves had been the ones to deal the first blow. They had snuck into Gladstone City in disguises, carrying out an intricate assassination scheme.

In the game's lore, the assassination had been carried out at 10:30 pm and went on for an hour.

Within that one hour, 99% of the leaders of the city had been murdered, leaving the rest mortally injured. When the Dark Elves began their main attack, the city was already in turmoil. The Dark Elf Army hadn't come across any significant resistance.

How did he know all of this so well?

Because in the game Legend, every beginner had to go through The Change of the Bloody Moon as part of their first mission. Their mission was to escape Gladstone.

"How can I save myself?"

Link paced the room, asking himself over and over again.

He would be experiencing a city's massacre in a foreign world. If he didn't run, by morning, he would definitely be one of the corpses in Gladstone River!



Thinking of the events he knew were about to happen made Link break out into a cold sweat. But as the only Archmage in the game, he was very strong in mind. Shocked, but still managing to keep his resolve, he had no real resentments about being placed in such a tight situation. Once he had processed what was going on, he began to think of a strategy to get himself out of his current circumstance.

Suddenly, Link's heart skipped a beat. A glowing numeral had appeared in his head. It was the number 20.

"These are... Omni Points? The God of Light had told the truth!" Link felt his spirits lift.

In the game, The God of Light had been the main God of the Legion of Light. It was the same in this world, Link confirmed with a quick review of his memories.

In the strange dimension that he had been in before being teleported to this world, the God of Light said that for him to leave Gladstone safely, he would receive 20 Omni Points. With them, he would be able to quickly grasp the power of magic.

Link's eyes lit up. He had been an Archmage in a game. He had no idea how magic actually worked. If he were to truly master magic, he would have to study at a magic academy. And that would require a huge amount of time – which he didn't have.

"How do I use Omni Points?" he asked immediately.

Something flashed in the corner of his eye. Link found a line of glowing text appear at the border of his vision. It was exactly the same as in the game.

The text started scrolling.

The gaming system is loading... Loading completed.

Scanning body stats... Scan completed.

Game player: Link Morani (noble)

Title: Magician's Apprentice

Magic Recovery Speed: 0.2 points per hour.

Maximum Mana: 1 (Mana consumption follows the Omni Points chart)

List of Mastered Spells: Level-0 The Magician's Hand (0.2 Mana per use)

Current gear: None

Link was dumbfounded.

What is this? It's so similar to the game's user interface... Anyways, this body is seriously trash. There's almost no difference between this body and a commoner's.

The gaming system went on to give him a thorough explanation.

To help the game player adapt to the real World of Firuman, the game player's body is integrated into the gaming system. The gaming system will give the game player missions, from which the game player can gain Omni Points.

"But what can Omni Points be used for?"

The interface refreshed to show new information.

Omni Points can be used to change the game player's body stats.

Exchange ratio: 1 Omni Point = 1 Mana Speed Recovery = 10 Maximum Mana Points.

Omni Points can be used to purchase spells. The spell prices are as shown below.

Mortal Spells:

Level-0 Spells = 1 Omni Point.

Level-1 Spells = 10 Omni Points.

Level-2 Spells = 20 Omni Points.

Level-10 Spells = 100 Omni Points, and so on.

Legendary Spells:

Level-11 Spells = 500 Omni Points.

Level-12 Spells = 1000 Omni Points.

Level-13 Spells = 2000 Omni Points.

Level-19 Legendary Pinnacle Spells = 128000 Omni Points, and so on.

Demi-God Divine Spells: Locked.

Okay. This definitely made things clear.

That is to say, as long as Link completed the missions given to him by the gaming system, he would receive Omni Points and continue getting stronger until he reached the Legendary Pinnacle of Level-19.

Of course, that would all be in the future.

Right now, Link only had 20 Omni Points. He needed to use his Omni Points wisely in order to escape from Gladstone safely.

In the game, Link had chosen to be a Magician. This was why his starting point to escape Gladstone City had been The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

On the night of The Change of the Bloody Moon, the Magic Academy had been one of the places in which the Dark Elves prioritized their attack.

The Magic Academy was very small. It had less than 100 pupils, and of that 100, less than 20 were full-fledged Magicians. The best among those Magicians was only Level-4.

Yet, more than 200 Assassins had been dispatched here. There were at least 20 already in hiding around the place.

Half of the Academy's tutors had been killed in their sleep. Some of them had woken up but had been unable to fight off the throngs of Assassins. As a result, the Magic Academy had fallen and its apprentices massacred!

It had been a real bloodbath!

Remembering the details of his last escape, Link decided to purchase some of the spells he had used back then first.

"Summon Spell Menu."

Many glowing cards appeared in his field of vision. Slowly rotating, each of the cards was a spell. The number on the upper left corner of the card indicated the Mana cost, while the number on the card's upper right corner indicated the spell's level. Every spell was there – up to more than a thousand of them.

The higher the level of magic, the brighter the card glowed.

The Legendary Spell Cards nearly blinded Link. In a sweeping glance, Link spotted Finger of Death, Doomsday Meteor, and Greater Ruin. All famous, and all Legendary.

"I was done in by that God of Light! If I had 2000 Omni Points, I would be able to win this battle single-handedly. But I only have 20 points."

Considering how weak the God of Light had looked, it had probably been difficult to just send him here. Giving him 20 points wasn't bad at all. Any more and that sad old fellow might have died on the spot.

Filter. Show only Level-0 Spells.

High-level spells were powerful. But he couldn't afford any of them. Just one Level-1 Spell cost 10 Omni Points, and their Mana consumption was much higher than a Level-0 Spell.

As for Level-2 Spells, they cost 20 Omni Points and used 30 Mana. The price and cost of using any of them were too high for Link to sustain. He didn't even consider them.

Level-0 Tricks were also known as Apprentice Spells. If not done well, they were just smoke and mirrors. Used properly, they could kill!

He had also chosen them because despite being much less powerful, Tricks required less casting time than the higher level spells.

Link could cast a Level-0 Spell in 0.1 seconds. For a Level-1 Spell, he needed at least 0.3 seconds. And he needed one full second for Level-3 Spells. That was far too long—completely unsuitable for a lone Magician.

Fwoosh. The bright magic cards disappeared, leaving some tens of dimly glowing cards behind. All of them had the number 0 inscribed on their upper right corner.

Link looked through them all one-by-one. Finally, he settled on four Level-0 Spells.



"Purchase Fireball, Earth Spike, Lesser Invisibility, Slumber."

Instantly, those magic cards lit up brightly. They shattered into countless little pinpoints of light then disappeared into thin air. Link felt his consciousness blur for a split second, then recover.

He suddenly found that he was very familiar with the four Level-0 Spells. If he wanted, he could have cast any of them in an instant.

That's it? he thought. The sensation of having learned a spell is exactly the same as back in the game. The familiar sensation gave Link a sense of comfort.

After purchasing the four spells, Link spent another two 2 Omni Points on Maximum Mana Points in order to be able to use his Mana. His Maximum Mana became 21 points, enough to use a Level-0 Spell ten times.

After converting the Omni Points, he felt the full level of Mana surge through his body and heaved a sigh of relief.

The gaming system was quite reliable. The Mana in his body had been filled automatically the first time he increased his Maximum Mana. If it had been empty, it would have needed time to recover. Link's Mana recovery speed of 0.2 Mana Points per hour made it virtually useless to wait for that to happen.

Now, he was left with 14 Omni Points.

Looking down at his pocket watch, just 5 minutes had passed. It was now 9:40.

The assassination would begin in an hour. Before that, it would be safe inside the Apprentices' Dorm. But outside, the Assassins were sure to be in their positions, ready and waiting. Running out now would be as good as suicide.

In the gaming world, to escape from the academy, one had to wait for the assassination to begin. The academy would be in chaos. That was the only way of escaping... and surviving.

There's still an hour left. What should I do? Link racked his brains.

Save the others? Persuade the Apprentices to escape with him?

That was pointless. Link was a nobody in the Magic Academy. Who would listen to someone who had only mastered one pitiful little Trick? They would just take him for a madman.

Get some gear to augment his powers as much as he could?

Yes, that was a good idea!

# Chapter 2

## The New Moon Wand

How could one get strong fast in the World of Firuman?

Well, there were three ways: gear, potions, and buffs.

The Apprentice's Dorm lodged only Apprentices. Their magical abilities were so low that he didn't even need to think about buffs.

Link didn't bother much about potions either. There were no alchemy laboratories in the Apprentice's Dorm. More than 150 feet lay between the Apprentice's Dorm and the closest alchemy laboratory—an impossible distance to cover in the dark, with Assassins at every turn waiting to strike.

The last and only viable option was gear.

What was the most important gear for a Magician? A tool to compress Mana!

In layman's terms, a wand.

A Magician could use magic without a wand, but Magicians had frail bodies. Unable to concentrate Mana strongly within their bodies, the magic they used would be very weak.

This made it necessary to rely on outside help. That is, wands.

For example, a Level-0 Fireball, cast by a Magician's Apprentice, would be roughly equivalent to a firecracker. But if the Magician's Apprentice were to use a wand, even a common one, he would be able to do much, much more. The firecracker would become... a large firework, perhaps even a grenade.

And there would be no change in the Mana consumed. The secret was all in the wand. It simply compressed the Mana.

If one were to liken magic to a bullet, wands would be guns. The quality of the gun

determined the impact of the bullet.

Wands were extremely expensive. The cheapest wand cost 100 gold coins. Link was just a small noble and the youngest son in his family. He had little talent in magic and had no way of getting his hands on a luxury item like that.

He didn't have one, but others in the dorm certainly did.

There were more than 50 Magician's Apprentices in the Apprentice's Dorm, most of whom who were loaded. At least twenty of them had wands, the best of which belonged to an Apprentice named Grant.

Link knew that the wand was called New Moon. It was one of the earlier works of the Wand Master Hermira, and was worth more than a thousand gold coins. It had been Grant's coming of age present from his father, a duke, to his beloved son.

It was rumored that Grant loved his wand so much that he even hugged it to sleep.

Link's target was the New Moon Wand.

He acted immediately.

Link put on the clothes by the bedside. He froze halfway. These were the Apprentice Robes given out by the Magic Academy. The material and design were unique. His identity as an Apprentice of the Magic Academy would be obvious to all who saw the robes. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem. But tonight, the more eye-catching he was, the faster he'd die.

Throwing off the Apprentice Robe, Link opened the chest and dug out a gray robe. It was his own. There was nothing special about it. Wearing it, he would be able to blend into any crowd without standing out.

Link set out after putting on his shoes.

Most Magicians liked towers. The Apprentice's Dorm was a tower with five floors, each of which had 10 rooms arranged in a circle.

Walking out, Link found himself in a round hall about 30 feet in diameter. It was dimly lit by a ball of light that floated above the hall. It was 9:45. For Magicians, who tended to sleep early, it was already bedtime.



Following the spiral stone stairs to the second floor, Link found his way to Grant's room and knocked on the door lightly.

There was no response. Grant was probably fast asleep.

Hesitating, Link stopped knocking. It might wake the other Apprentices. Considering what he had in mind, that wasn't a good thing.

Reaching out, he laid a hand on the lock. Link activated The Magician's Hand.

The Magician's Hand

Mana consumption: 0.2 points

Level 0 Trick

Effect: Move objects without physical contact (A technique Magicians often use to show off.)

The Magician's Hand had been the only magic that the original Link had known. It was very simple and cost only 0.2 Mana Points.

The Apprentice's Dorm used standard locks. Opening one with The Magician's Hand was as easy as pie. Five seconds later, the door opened with a click.

The wooden door let out a slight squeak as Link gently pushed it open. For someone stealing for the first time in their life, the noise would be extremely jarring. But not for Link. As someone who had managed to become the first Archmage in the virtual-reality game, he was, mentally, as strong as a rock.

Without flinching, he pushed the door open, walked in and closed the door with a light hand. He did all this as naturally as entering his own room.

The interior was very dark, the arrangement similar to his own. However, the furniture was much more ornate than those that Link owned. The academy didn't provide its pupils with furniture. Grant had bought these himself.

Grant laid on the bed, fast asleep. The rumors had been true; he loved his wand so much that he clasped it tightly even in his sleep.

It would have been a difficult situation for a real thief. But not so for Link. He knew that the massacre would effectively erase anything else that happened in the city. No one would care about anything else.

There were no repercussions for him to fear.

Walking up to Grant's bed, he swung his hand at Grant's handsome face. The slap landed heavily on Grant's face with a resounding smack.

That was for the original Link. This Grant had often picked on the original Link. Once, he had even pulled a prank that caused Link to break an arm.

Grant's father was a duke, so the young man had chosen to suffer in silence. But the Link now would never do that.

With that slap, Grant woke up, startled, and jumped up from the bed. Pressing a hand to his cheek, he looked around, yelling, "What's going on? What's going on?"

He was still hazy from sleep, not fully understanding the situation.

During all this, he relaxed his grip on the wand in his hand.

Quickly, Link snatched the intricately-made wand from him. Then, he lifted an arm. Before Grant managed to get a grasp of what was going on, a karate-chop landed heavily on the back of his neck.

Grant's eyes rolled back and he fell back onto his bed, unconscious.

He had no idea of what had just happened.

Link had the wand!

Link admired the wand in his hand. It was 15 inches long, with rings of magic-imbued gold inlaid along its length. Tiny magic runes had been engraved throughout the wand, a new moon embellishing its tip.

A virtual box appeared beside the wand as he admired it. Glowing text flashed through the box.

New Moon Wand

Quality: Fine

Effect: Offensive spells gain +20% power

(Note: Coming of age gift from Duke Gridan to his second son, Grant)

Link smiled. The God of Light made this gaming system really well. It has a true audio-visual feel to it, he thought.

He had gotten the New Moon Wand. Taking out his pocket watch, it was now 9:50, he still had forty minutes left. There was more than enough time. He walked out of the room and placed the tip of the New Moon Wand against the door lock. Activate—The Magician's Hand.

With another click, the bolt of the lock was destroyed. With the wand, The Magician's Hand had become much more powerful! No one would be able to open the door now, whether from the inside or from the outside. Even if Grant woke up halfway, he would have to find a different way to get out of the room.

In another forty minutes, no one in the academy would care about anyone else's affairs.

He had the wand. That was the first step.

Link made his way to the first floor of the Apprentice's Dorm. On the first floor, there were a few display cabinets. One of them contained a magic bracelet called The Band of Protection. It was a low-level magic item. The one who wore it could use the Level-2 defensive spell, Guarding Barrier.

Link had to have it.

During this period, because of the low Mana density, there were less powerful people around as compared to the future. A Level-2 defensive spell was already considered to be very strong. Used well, it might even save his life.

As the war progressed, powerful forces clashing caused dimensional cracks to appear across the Firuman Continent. As a result, the Mana density of the world would increase, and along with it, the number of combatants. By then, Level-2 Spells wouldn't do much at all.

But his problem now was that a fully-fledged Magician lived on the first floor—Madame Fairfax. This kind old lady was a Level-1 Magician who was also the dorm supervisor.

She was a light sleeper and woke up at the slightest noise. It would be much more difficult to steal the bangle with her there. But Link had a plan.

He walked towards the stairs, but his footsteps paused before another door. Sentimental feelings welled up within him.

Link blinked. The young man's memories replayed in his head.

The Apprentice's Dorm was a mixed dorm. An Apprentice called Celine, a commoner, lived in the room. She studied in the Magic Academy on a full scholarship thanks to her exceptional talent in magic. Within just three months, she had mastered three Level-0 Spells. Her future was bright and unfettered.

According to his memories, Celine was a very beautiful girl. Even without makeup, she was the uncontested first beauty of the Magic Academy. But that wasn't the reason for his feelings. It was because she had been a great help to the original Link. When Grant had broken his arm, Celine had helped to look after him for more than a month, giving the excuse that she held some responsibility in the incident.

Link was introverted and had almost no self-confidence. He had virtually no friends in the academy. He easily developed strong feelings for Celine within that month.

"Haha. Kid, is she your puppy love?" Link chuckled softly to himself.

He wasn't willing to stick his nose in. He would be lucky just to make it out on his own. With one more person, the danger he faced would increase exponentially.

Turning to leave, he took a step, then a second, and then a third. On the fourth step, he froze.

He found that the sentimental feelings within him had become much stronger, so much so that he could no longer go on ignoring them.

"Fine, fine. Since it's your last wish, I'll do it. After all, I did take over your body."

It was inexplicable. But when Link made that promise, those feelings vanished. He felt



lighter, as if a burden had been lifted from his chest.

Link knew that the original owner of his body had disappeared forever.

What a besotted fool, Link thought, shaking his head.

He would take this Celine away, but not now. Now, he had to steal... no, take The Band of Protection.

# Chapter 3

## His Way of the Magician

On the first floor of the Apprentice's Dorm were three display cabinets.

In the first cabinet, there was a document in the hand of the previous Lord of Gladstone City. The second contained a beautiful, hand-wrought sword that was supposedly a gift from the dwarves. The last, of course, contained the magic bangle, made almost two centuries ago, by a Level-10 Master Magician from the Magic Academy.

With the low Mana density in this world, no more Legends (Level-11 and higher) had appeared in a while. A Level-10 Master Magician was already the pinnacle of existence in the mortal realm. He had been the pride and joy of The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

The things on display weren't actually that valuable. They were displayed just to show off the history of the Magic Academy. Which was why they had only been guarded with a simple spell that would sound an alarm if the display cabinets were destroyed.

But Link knew that the display cabinet had a key. Better yet, he knew where it was.

The hall on the first floor was much wider. Because it was late at night, it was just as dark as the hall on the floor Grant's room had been on.

Link walked lightly to Madame Fairfax's door. He knocked lightly on the door.

Bam, bam, bam. In the silence of the night, the knocking sounds seemed especially loud.

Madame Fairfax replied at the first rap. "Who is it?"

She really did sleep lightly.

Link made his voice sound urgent and anxious. "Madame, it's me, Link from room 309. I need to talk to you about something, it's urgent. Can you please open the door?"

This was a kind old lady. She would never refuse help to anyone, even if it disturbed her sleep.

"Aye. Give me a second. I'm coming."

Rustling noises came from inside the door. It was probably the old lady putting on some more clothes. The attire of the ladies of this world was quite complicated, and Madame Fairfax wasn't as nimble as she used to be. After about three or four minutes, Link heard footsteps from underneath the door.

Link took a deep breath and raised the New Moon Wand. He pointed it squarely at the wooden door.

Very soon, the lock turned and the door opened with a click. Madame Fairfax's wrinkled face appeared from behind the door.

"What happened..."

Before she even finished, the tip of Link's wand glowed.

"Slumber."

Slumber

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Makes people fall into a deep sleep. The stronger the opponent, the weaker the effect.

Now this spell was considered real magic. Link thought back to the sensation of casting the spell. He found it fascinating. It had been just as easy as it had been in the game!

If it's like that, it won't be too difficult to escape from Gladstone. Link felt more confident.

The magic had used one of Link's Omni Points. He had also used two Mana Points. But it was worth it. There was no way Link could have brought himself to knock this gentle old lady over the head.

Madame Fairfax was just a Level-1 Magician, barely a true Magician. Her magical talent was extremely common. Her Level-1 qualification had been obtained out of sheer determination and time.

Even now, just woken up and barely awake in the middle of the night, she hadn't even been in time to react when Link had cast the spell as fast as he could. With the flash of light on his wand, she crumpled, falling towards the ground.

Lightning quick spellcasting. That was how Link had managed to outshine the rest in the game Legend. It was just as lethal in this world.

Link quickly caught the old lady's frail body and moved her back into her room, placing her on the bed.

He estimated that the spell's effects would last for an hour at the most. It was 9:55. He had enough time.

Madame Fairfax was the dorm supervisor, so she held the key to the display cabinets.

Link searched the room. Finally, he found a large ring of keys in a small chest in the dresser by the window. The old lady was a little forgetful, so she had labeled each of the keys. This made things much easier for Link.

Easily finding the key, Link opened the third display cabinet and grabbed the Magic Bangle.

The bangle had been made of fine gold and purple copper alloys. As a result, it glowed a faint purple. Magic runes were engraved along its circumference. Because of all the Mana within the runes, a silver glow emanated from within them. It was beautiful.

The Band of Protection

Quality: Fine

Effect: Forms a Level-2 barrier when activated.

Uses: 0/1 (Limited use item)

(Note: Pride of the academy. One of Master Magician Aylant's earlier works. An unfinished piece.)

"Even though it can only be used once, it's enough for me!" Link wore the Bangle on his wrist.

He had now obtained all the useful items he could from the Apprentice's Dorm.

Flipping his pocket watch open, it showed the time: 9:58. There was half an hour left. He had one last thing to do—complete the last wishes of the original Link and save Celine.

Taking big strides towards the second floor, he didn't have to look around for her room. Link's legs seemed to bring him to Celine's door of their own accord.

Bam, bam, bam. This was the third time Link was knocking on a door tonight.

There was no reply. The young girl slept soundly. Link sighed softly. He pointed the New Moon Wand at the lock and activated The Magician's Hand.

Within one second, he heard a click and the door was unlocked. Link pushed it open, walking into the room. He closed the door and locked it behind him.

Only then did he turn to look around the room.

The room was very sparse. Besides the bed, the only other furniture was a worn-down looking dresser. On it, a mirror and a comb lay next to an open book. There was a half-eaten loaf of bread on the other side.

Celine lay on the bed under a thin, tattered blanket. The blanket was too thin and barely able to retain heat. She was huddled tightly in a ball because of the cold.

This was the difference between nobles and commoners. Even with a full scholarship, she had no choice but to live a frugal life. The original Link, as a noble, even with his lousy magical talent, didn't have to worry about things like heating and where his next meal came from.

Link sat down on the chair by the table. Silently, he stared out of the window and into the night, waiting patiently.

It was 10:00. There was still half an hour before they could take the chance to escape into the chaos. To avoid having to explain too much, Link left Celine asleep for the moment.

Walking over to the dressing table, he flipped through the pages of the magic book that laid on it. The book was called The Branches of Magic—An Analysis. It was an advanced magic book. Link tried reading a few pages of it.

"Hmm?"

Amazingly, Link found that he could not only recognize what was written but easily understand it too! He even found some errors in the magical theorems.

His brain had become exceptionally good.

He couldn't believe it. Thinking that it was a fluke, he flipped through a couple more pages. It wasn't just a lucky break! The book, which should have been completely foreign to Link, especially being from Earth, seemed just as easy to comprehend as a kindergarten storybook!

"Oh yes, the God of Light did say that he would fortify my soul so that I could travel through time and space safely. Could this be an effect of that?"

It seemed to be the only possible explanation.

Link continued to read it, rapidly developing an interest in its contents. He flipped through the pages, reading each one quickly and understanding everything he came across. Not only that, but he also knew it by heart and developed his own interpretations of it.

The cogs and wheels in his brain turned like a well-oiled machine, seemingly made for magic.

By the time he had finished the book, Link had developed a rather comprehensive understanding of this new foreign world.

According to the book, the World of Firuman was a lone island surrounded by an endless sea of Mana. Mana emanated from the sea and drifted into the World of Firuman, nourishing all the creatures of the world.

Magicians knew this phenomenon as "soaking". The world was "soaked" in this sea of Mana.

Even though the drifting Mana had nothing on the Sea of Mana, it made the world a

different place, full of different forms and colors. The creatures of the World of Firuman used the Mana to create a bright and colorful Magic Civilization.

This was the way Magicians saw the world.

That's weird. I was an Archmage in the game, but I feel as if I'm learning what magic really is for the first time.

Link looked at the wand in his hand. He found that it wasn't difficult to understand the principles behind the wand. It was just a nifty little skill used to compress Mana. He could sense the wand's deficiencies easily.

If I could just study properly, in three months... no, no, just one month, I could make a better wand than this one! Link thought confidently.

As a gamer, Link had known how to cast a spell, but not how the spell worked. The so-called Archmage had just been an honorary title by the other gamers. In this world, with the blessing of the God of Light, he had the resources to become a true Archmage.

"After I get out of Gladstone City, I must get some magic books. I'll study them when I'm not completing missions. I must get stronger!"

He could become very strong and master many spells very quickly even if he only relied on the Omni Points.

But there was a fatal problem in the spells provided by the gaming system—they were Basic and run of the mill, just like those in the game.

The same spell would always be weaker when wielded by a player rather than by an Elite Boss, let alone an Ultimate Boss.

All the powerful Magicians had their own techniques. The same spells could be much more powerful than gamers' in their hands. These supreme magic skills were built on a deep understanding of magic. It wasn't something that the gaming system could give.

In his last fight with the Lord of the Deep Nozama, Nozama had been able to use his superior magic skills to cast the Level-19 Spell, Finger of Death, instantaneously. There had been almost no delay before he cast the spell.

At the time, up to 90% of the challenging team had been killed by Nozama's Finger of

Death.

The gaming system and the Omni Points are just bonuses. I need to have my own way of the Magician! Having figured out which way he would go in the future, Link felt more at peace.

Taking out his pocket watch to look once more, he found that it was already 10:25. He didn't have much time left.

Link turned and strode over to the bed. Patting Celine's smooth face lightly, he said softly, "Celine, Celine. Wake up."

Undeniably, she was beautiful. Her figure, facial features, and style were all admirably fine. No wonder the original Link had been besotted with her.

For whatever reason, Link felt that her face was familiar, but he couldn't put a finger on where he had seen it before.

That's weird, Link thought, feeling disorientated.

Celine slept very soundly. She murmured, "Mother, let me sleep for a while longer..."

Her tone was like a little girl. Link smiled in spite of himself.

But Celine came to her senses very quickly. Link felt her freeze. She turned her head swiftly, a pair of flawless sapphires fixing themselves on Link, not a wink of sleep left in them.

"Why are you in my room?" She looked surprised, but not afraid.

Link stepped back. His expression was serious. "Get up quickly. We can't stay at the academy anymore. We need to leave now!"

"What did you say!" Celine was taken aback, but she still put on the clothes that were by her bed.

"Don't wear those! Wear some simple short robes and some pants!" Link warned her.

He looked out through the window. His pupils constricted. In the hazy moonlight, he could see many silhouettes swiftly moving through the shadows.



The Dark Elf Assassins!

They had begun!

Dark figures moved quickly and silently. Two of them charged towards the Apprentice's Dorm.

# Chapter 4

## The Bloody Assassins

"Hurry, they're coming," Link urged, his voice soft.

"Don't rush me. I'm putting them on," Celine complained under her breath.

Link turned his head to glance at her. He was stunned.

The young girl had had no choice but to take off her nightdress in order to put on the short robe and trousers. The underclothes she wore were very thin. Part of her naked waist peeked out mischievously. Under the hazy moonlight and contrasted by the curvy hips below, her waist seemed especially slender, her skin so white it was blinding.

Link felt his blood boil. Hurriedly, he averted his gaze, "I saw Assassins coming over. Later, follow me. If anything happens, I'll protect you," he explained under his breath.

All the Dark Elves involved in this operation were Elites and extremely powerful. In the game, during his escape from Gladstone, they had all been in Elite mode, with insanely high blood and attack levels.

Normal Apprentices stood no chance against them.

"Assassins? That's terrible!" Celine quickened her pace. A scream from outside the window proved what Link had just explained.

As she had finished putting on her clothes, Link walked towards the door. Ten feet away from it, he pointed his wand at the lock and activated The Magician's Hand. The door swung open.

Some Magician's Apprentices milled about outside the door, but luckily no Assassins.

"It's safe, follow me!"

Link beckoned to Celine. Unless absolutely necessary, he didn't want to clash with any

Assassins. He wasn't afraid of them, but it meant that he had to use his limited Mana.

Celine followed him unquestioningly. She found that the Link in front of her was completely different from usual. There was a gravitas about him.

"This human is strange." Celine looked at the back of his figure curiously. He didn't seem anxious despite there being creatures all around ready to kill them. Link was observing the situation in the hall, and not particularly paying attention to the girl's odd behavior.

His image of Celine, according to the original Link's memories, was that of a gentle, mild-mannered maiden. It seemed as if nothing could faze her. Because of that, Link didn't think that there was anything off about the way that she was behaving.

The hall was a mess. The Magician's Apprentices were all in a state of confusion. They had no idea what was going on.

"What happened, why is it so noisy?"

"Damn it, I was having some good dreams earlier!"

"Good heavens, what a mess!"

Seeing Link come out from Celine's room, the Apprentices all turned to look at him in astonishment. Some couldn't hold back their thoughts.

"A piece of trash and a commoner, actually fooling around in the middle of the night? Trash!" This was spat out in jealousy.

"Celine, why would you shame yourself doing this?" This came from a confused fellow Apprentice.

Celine's face, which had been calm and collected, flushed pink. Just as she opened her mouth to defend herself, a shrill scream came from the first floor of the Apprentice's Dorm.

It was a scream that could only come from someone dying in agony, piercing and echoing throughout the building and catching everyone's attention all at once.

"What happened?"

"Damn it, it sounded like Madame Fairfax."

Bam! A Magician's Apprentice raced out of his room, yelling, "Look outside, there are people attacking the academy!"

In just a short while, many of the academy's buildings had been set on fire. Every now and then, the sounds of magical explosions filled the air. In the Garden of Magic nearby, they could see the vague outlines of people fighting and flashes of magic.

It was chaos.

"Oh, God of Light, who can tell me what's going on?"

"Good heavens, it's the Dark Elves, the lackeys of Lolth, the Spider Queen. Look, here they come!"

At the top of the stairs leading to the second floor stood two figures fully clad in black leather. Though they were masked, their characteristic dark red eyes and ashen gray skin betrayed their race.

Link was startled at the sight of them. He knew that a battle was unavoidable. He pulled Celine into a room.

He had a reason for doing so. The hall was too large, meaning that there was too much space around the two of them. The elves would be difficult to handle. On the contrary, the door to the room that they were in was small and narrow. Even if the Assassins followed him in, he only had to face one opponent at a time. This would reduce his Mana consumption significantly.

Alarmed cries came from outside the door.

"He killed Madame Fairfax!" a Magician's Apprentice yelled and pointed at one of the Dark Elves. The Dark Elf held a bloody, dripping dagger.

The Assassin responded with his actions.

One of the Assassins fitted an arrow into the Dark Elf Bow in his hand. Pulling it swiftly, he released the string with a twang, causing the arrow to fly and land square in the throat of the Magician's Apprentice.

The Apprentice crumpled to the ground, blood spreading out on the floor around him. The scent of blood filled the air.

The other Apprentices were speechless.

"Ahhhhh!!!"

"Murderer!"

The young Magicians were stunned silly by the scene. Most of them were panic-stricken. Some ran back into their rooms, bolting their doors. Some could only crawl up into a ball and scream. Others were bolder and retaliated!

But what could the spells of a Magician's Apprentice do? Their attacks were a joke to the powerful Dark Elf Assassins.

Holding his wand, a student threw a Level-0 Fireball at one of the Assassins.

The pale orange fireball, barely larger than a marble, whizzed towards the Assassin with a hissing noise.

The Assassin didn't move an inch. He just faced the Fireball, a pitch-black dagger appearing in his hand. He swung it at the tiny flame.

Poof. The fireball was sliced into two halves. It burst up into a flurry of sparks and disappeared.

"Anti-magic weapons!" cried out the Magician.

Firuman Continents' Warriors had Battle Qi, but only from Level 3 onwards. Below that, Warriors used all types of anti-magic items against Magicians.

Anti-magic weapons, Elemental Magic Resistant Armor, and potions. All were ways that Warriors used to fight against Magicians.

Of course, if one was fast enough and sharp enough, one could duck and evade spells. But there was a considerable risk in doing so. If one met a powerful Magician, just one Fireball could burn the self-proclaimed nimble fellow to ashes.

Those were the last words of that young Magician. The Assassins didn't give him a

chance to cast another spell. The Dark Elf on the right raised his bow and sealed the Apprentice's fate with another arrow to the throat.

Then, the Assassin began his massacre. His bow sang short, high-pitched tones as the Magician's Apprentices fell to the ground one by one. They were killed like chickens in a slaughterhouse.

The elves were too powerful. And they were experienced in battle. The unseasoned Magicians were defenseless. Within the blink of an eye, only a handful of them were left. One of them rushed into the room where Link hid.

He shut the door behind him with a loud bang. Then, he cowered on the ground, hugging his head and shivering uncontrollably. He had been stupefied.

In the room, Celine hid behind Link, her brows furrowed tightly. It was unnerving. The quiet, peaceful Magic Academy had transformed into a bloody scene right before her eyes. She found it hard to believe.

"The Dark Elves really are a bunch of beasts!" Celine had grown to love the peaceful environment of the human academy in her three months here. But the Dark Elves had destroyed all of it within just a matter of minutes.

Link was the calmest. He faced the door, held the New Moon Wand in his hand and waited patiently.

In that moment, Link, too, felt fear in his heart. This was the first time he was actually experiencing such a bloodbath. But his strong mind suppressed his fear, not allowing it to influence his thoughts and actions.

Some screams came from under the door, then the sound of doors being kicked down. More cries rang out. Then came an eerie silence. It was obvious that all the Magician's Apprentices on the second floor had been killed. Then came the sound of footsteps. They grew louder as the steps got closer and closer. The Assassins were walking towards the room in which the three of them hid.

"Don't kill me, don't kill me, I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" the young Magician blubbered uncontrollably as he curled up on the floor. He succumbed to loud wails, snot and tears smeared across his face.

Celine didn't even lift an eyebrow, but the space between her and Link grew tighter

still.

The footsteps stopped right outside the door. There was a short pause of two seconds, each dragging on into eternity for the Apprentices in the room.

Suddenly, with a bang, cracks appeared on the wooden door.

The thin wooden door couldn't hold up against a Dark Elf Assassin's strength.

"Little cowards, why don't you let me send you down to hell?"

Link looked at him. The Assassin's information appeared in his head.

Dark Elf Assassin (Elite)

Level-2 Warrior

Battle Skill: Speed Burst

Gear: Standard Bow (Fine)

At this time, a Level-2 Elite Assassin was an extremely powerful being compared to the average person. To make matters worse, all of the Dark Elf Assassins tonight were at least this level. Gladstone was a small city without many strong inhabitants. It was no wonder that it had fallen!

Something else shifted in Link's field of vision. Another message appeared—it was a mission!

Open details of mission.

Part One of Mission: Retaliate!

Mission Details: Kill the Assassins in the Apprentice's Dorm.

Reward: 15 Omni Points

Link was excited! He needed power, and he needed it fast. This mission had come at just the right time!

# Chapter 5

## The Magician's First Battle

Of the three Magician's Apprentices, Link was the calmest. Holding an elaborate magic wand, he was also the most eye-catching.

The Dark Elf stood at the door. He raised his bow and nocked an arrow. With a twang of his bow, an arrow shot towards Link's head.

If he had had enough Mana, Link would have used the Level-1 Spell, Lesser Field of Protection from Arrows, to block the attack. But each Level-1 Spell cost 10 Omni Points—more than he could possibly afford.

So instead, Link used the Level-1 Spell, Fireball.

A white, marble-sized fireball appeared in the air before him. With a tap of his wand. It shot towards the Dark Elf Assassin's arrow.

"Huh, your spellcasting isn't bad. But it's naive to think that it can stop my anti-magic arrow," the Dark Elf Assassin chuckled to himself.

In the next moment, the fireball and the arrow flew past each other, separated by only a few centimeters.

Link and the elf watched silently as the tip of the arrow flew past the fireball... followed by the shaft. As the flame glided past the arrow's feathers, the Level-1 Fireball exploded!

A boom rattled the air. It wasn't too loud, but the air beside the anti-magic arrow expanded rapidly, sending air currents in all directions and more importantly, against the arrow itself.

Yes. To deal with the Magic Academy, all the Dark Elves had been equipped with anti-magic weapons. If Link had aimed the Fireball directly at the arrow, the fireball would have been pierced and scattered into mere sparks.



Instead, he had used the force of the Fireball's explosion to change the trajectory of the anti-magic arrow! It was incredibly effective!

The arrow strayed from its original path. By the time it reached Link, it had deviated more than seven inches from where it should have been. It flew past his cheek, ruffling some locks of his hair.

"Hmm?" The Dark Elf Assassin seemed surprised that he had missed.

He prepared another arrow.

But he never got a chance to release it. Link had never been the type to get hit and not give payback. His style had always been to give an eye for an eye!

Pssh! The floor where the Dark Elf stood suddenly warped as an Earth Spike shot up from it.

Earth Spike

Level-0 Earth Element Spell

Effect: To bring up a solid stone spike up to 2 feet tall from the ground... don't step on it.

Like the Fireball before it, the earth spike appeared so abruptly that the Dark Elf Archer didn't have time to react. To make matters worse, the elf had worn light, thin-soled shoes for stealth. He was almost completely unprotected.

With a dull thud, the earth spike pierced through the Dark Elf's ankle, rising up to extend through the side of his calf.

One can only imagine the amount of agony such an injury would cause!

"Ahhh!"

Even the Dark Elf Assassin, who had gone through extensive and formidable training regimes, couldn't bear it. He screamed out in pain, the arrow he had just nocked falling to the ground. He fell backwards, landing on his behind, and shaking uncontrollably.

Pssh! Another earth spike rose up from the ground!

This spike had been placed ingeniously, as if Link had known exactly how the Dark Elf Assassin would react. As the elf fell backwards, the second earth spike rose up from the ground, pointing directly towards the Assassin's back.

With another dull thud, the Dark Elf landed on the ground. He jerked. His eyes wide and his muscles taut, he remained motionless for two seconds. Then, his head drooped.

He was dead.

Even a legendary hero wouldn't survive being impaled by a two-foot-tall earth spike like that.

Both spikes had been activated swiftly and silently, leaving their target defenseless.

A Dark Elf Assassin had been killed within a one-second encounter! Only when the elf fell to the ground did his companion in the hall realize what had happened.

There was no way he could have imagined it. There were only Magician's Apprentices in that room. He thought that they would've been an easy kill, just like those in the other rooms.

"You little shit!"

Holding an anti-magic dagger, he sprinted towards Link. He ran quickly, gaining at least 50 feet of ground each second. He looked just like a black whirlwind.

He had used the Battle Skill: Speed Burst.

Fast opponents with anti-magic weapons were the worst nightmares of low-level Magicians. In close range, they usually spelled disaster.

"Careful!" a voice rang out from behind him. It was Celine.

Link's face was as hard as nails. His eyes cool and indifferent to the Assassin in front of him, he summoned the Spell Menu.

"Purchase Level-1 Spell: Vector Resistance Field."

Spell purchase successful. 10 Omni Points used.

## Vector Resistance Field

### Level-1 Spell

Mana Cost: 6

Effect: Repel objects towards the direction chosen by the bearer.

If Level-0 Spells were equivalent to large firecrackers, then Level-1 Spells were powerful enough to make the average human cower in fear.

The Assassin got within three feet of Link. He struck out at Link with the dagger and lifted a foot to kick him. Link tapped the New Moon Wand in the thin air before him. There! he exclaimed to himself.

Level-1 Spell, cast successfully within 0.3 seconds!

Ripples of wind spread out from the tip of Link's wand, warping the air before him. The ripples radiated out and away from Link towards the direction he faced.

The Assassin, who had been charging forward like an arrow, stopped as if he had slammed into a wall. For a split second, his body stopped in mid-air—as if time had frozen. The force of the Vector Resistance Field built up to its peak. With a boom, the Assassin's body ricocheted back in the opposite direction!

With the strength of an Elite Level-2 Warrior-Assassin, he could have resisted the repelling forces of the Level-1 Spell. But Link had cast it at the perfect time.

The Assassin had just lifted a leg when the Vector Resistance Field had been cast. In such an unstable posture, the elf had been unable to produce enough power to resist the spell.

Link had achieved complete victory by pitting a Level-1 Spell, at the peak of its strength, against the Assassin in his weakest moments!

Having gotten the upper hand, Link pursued. There was no way he'd let his opponent get a chance to rest and recover.

Link pointed his wand towards the Dark Elf. Even as his opponent's body flew through the air, a Level-0 Fireball came shooting at him.

The fireball, its Mana having been compressed by the wand, was much hotter than it normally was and glowed a fiery white.

The Assassin was remarkable. Even as he flew back, out of instinct, he managed to lift his dagger to stab at the incoming fireball.

If the Fireball had been cast by the average Magician's Apprentice, it would have been easily dispersed by the anti-magic dagger.

However, the one who had cast the Fireball had spellcasting abilities far beyond the elf's own imagination.

The marble-sized, white ball of flame danced around like a sprite. It didn't fly in a straight path, but instead spiraled around in circles. Incredibly, it sped up and slowed down randomly, making it impossible to predict where it would be in the next moment!

Just as the Assassin's dagger seemed to touch it, the little fireball evaded the blade nimbly and glided through the air in a smooth arc, landing right between the Assassin's eyes.

As a Level-0 Spell, Fireball wasn't powerful. Even with the magic wand, the most damage it could do was to blast the average human's hands to a bloody mess. Used on a Dark Elf Assassin, it would barely be able to crack open the calluses on his hands.

But a fireball exploding next to fragile areas like the eyes was a different story altogether.

The Assassin was faced with this tragic scenario even as he hurtled through the air.

He was masked, but the mask only covered the lower part of his face, leaving his eyes exposed. Link's Fireball was fast. The Assassin had only enough time to close his eyes. But how could delicate things like eyelids shield anything from a fireball's explosion?

Bang! The fireball exploded, destroying the Assassin's eyes and leaving them bloody. He screamed in pain. Everything was pitch black – he couldn't see! He was terrified.

But his screams only lasted for a split second. He fell to the ground. Even before he fell, an earth spike stood ready and waiting where he would land.

Tragically, the now blind Assassin didn't even notice it.

Pssh. The earth spike impaled the Assassin's chest from the back, ending his life right then and there.

With this, both Assassins had been dealt with.

Magicians and Assassins were arch-enemies. Their powers and strengths were polar opposites. A low-level Magician could slay a high-level Assassin, but it was just as possible for a beginner Assassin to kill a high-level Magician with a well-planned stab.

When they dueled, winning and losing wasn't determined by their levels, but rather, their battle skills and experience.

Link had executed everything almost perfectly in this battle.

In the fight, Link had used a total of five Level-0 Spells. The Level-1 Spell he purchased had cost him 16 Mana Points. Link hadn't moved an inch throughout the entire battle. Not because he couldn't, but simply because he didn't need to.

Notifications flashed through Link's head.

Mission complete. Player Link receives 15 Omni points.

A warm current flowed through Link's body. Link checked his Omni Points again. It had been 14 Points. Purchasing a Level-1 Spell had cost him 10 Points. With the 15 Points he had just received, he now had 19 Points in total.

The Magician's Apprentice by the door had seen everything. He had been watching with dread and anticipation. When the Assassin died, he stammered, "Link, you... you... you..."

Was this still that nobody he had known? His spellcasting was downright incredible!

The cowering Magician had no words for the wonder he felt. He was amazed, not only by the spells Link had used, but also the... the presence he carried when Link used magic—as if everything was completely under his control.

"That was simply God-like!" He finally found the right words.

Link's expression betrayed not a hint of pride. Such battles were child's play to him. He left the room. "Come on, Celine!"

"Oh. Okay." Celine threw Link a look of admiration. Following him, she asked, "Where are we going?"

To be honest, the Dark Elves' ambush had taken her aback, but she didn't really think much of it. She followed Link simply because she was curious. The human Magician had changed too much. Something wasn't right.

"To the academy's Portal Tower." Link had planned an escape route from very early on.

The city was surrounded by the Dark Elf Army, and within it, hordes of Dark Elf Assassins. He now had 19 Omni Points, but less than 3 Mana Points. With an extra person with him, fighting his way out wasn't realistic. The only way out was to use the portal in the Portal Tower.

After thinking it over, Link spent 1 Omni Point on 10 Maximum Mana Points. Link's Maximum Mana was now 31 Points.

Because of the spells he had used earlier, his Mana wasn't full, but only at 13 Points. He would have to wait for the rest to recover.

His Mana recovery speed had never seemed more important. His recovery speed was only 0.2 Points per hour. In such fast-paced, precarious circumstances, it was as good as nothing.

I still have 18 Omni Points. They should be enough for anything that might happen. Link felt slightly more at peace.

# Chapter 6

## The Mission—Or Survival

There were two types of Magicians.

The first were Scholar-Magicians. Such individuals had deep understandings of how magic worked. Normally, their spellcasting was excellent, but they were not fighters. Under pressure, they made all types of mistakes.

Unfortunately, the magic tutors of The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings had all been Scholar-Magicians.

Link saw Grant's corpse in one of the rooms. It lay on the floor, a deep, bloody hole in the middle of its chest. Grant had obviously been awake when he was murdered.

The floor had been littered with bodies, the air filled with the scent of their blood. Link mentally suppressed the urge to puke. What surprised him was that even though Celine's face was still pale, it had regained most of its normal composure.

It seemed that the maiden's soul and spirit were much stronger than her delicate appearance suggested.

Seeing a magic wand on the ground, Link picked it up. He passed it to Celine. "Take it."

Celine nodded. Taking the wand, she took a deep breath and tried to cast a Fireball. She took just over a second to do it.

"Not bad," Link praised her. It was an excellent attempt for the average Magician's Apprentice.

"Far behind you." Celine smiled faintly, looking much more at ease than before.

The two of them walked down the stairs. In the hall of the first floor, they saw Madame Fairfax's corpse. She lay there with her eyes wide open, an arrow lodged in her chest.

Sighing to himself, Link walked past the old lady's corpse and headed out of the

Apprentice's Dorm.

Just as he was about to reach the exit, some eye-catching, glowing text appeared in his mind.

Part Two of Mission: Stop The Signal

Mission Details: Destroy the Portal Tower of the Magic Academy. Stop the Dark Elves from using the Portal Tower to contact the Dark Elf Army outside the city.

Mission Reward: 20 Omni Points

Seeing it, Link laughed bitterly inside. A reward of 20 Omni Points. It was very high, but he wanted to escape via the Portal Tower. If he destroyed it, how would he escape?

Never mind, he thought. I'll deal with it when the time comes. Let's get to the Portal Tower first. As for the mission, I'll just accept it for now. I'll forfeit if the circumstances don't allow it.

Omni Points were important, but his life was much more so. He had to act wisely.

After considering it thoroughly, Link chose to accept the mission for now.

Then, he trudged on with Celine.

The sounds of skirmishes from outside the academy had died down. The magic tutors were not good at battle techniques. Already at a disadvantage, their small numbers and being taken by surprise made them no match for the well-trained Dark Elf Assassins.

At the exit of the Apprentice's Dorm, Link tapped Celine and himself with his magic wand. He cast the Spell of Lesser Invincibility twice.

Lesser Invincibility

Level-0 spell

Effect: Gathers a shroud of darkness around the bearer. Is very effective at concealment in the dark. User must beware of bright lights.



This was the most basic spell of invincibility, as it was unable to conceal the sound of footsteps and scents. Bright lights and hunting dogs easily rendered it ineffective. But deep in the night, it would be enough.

"Follow me closely."

Link stepped into the darkness first, heading towards the direction of the Portal Tower. Celine followed closely behind him.

Not far from the Apprentice's Dorm was the Magic Academy's Starry Gardens. Flowers from all seasons were in full bloom under the nourishment of Mana. Peonies, roses, lilies, and tulips—the garden had every flower one could think of. It was beautiful. But the beauty of the scenery was destroyed by a corpse sprawled in the shrubs.

"It's Mr. Glasse," Celine said softly.

Mr. Glasse, a Level-3 Illusionist, skilled at transmutation magic and virtually harmless in battle. An arrow was buried deep in his back.

Evidently, his illusions hadn't managed to fool the Dark Elves.

Link had prepared himself for this. If no unexpected changes had occurred, he knew that they would see many of his magic tutors' bodies lying ahead of them.

And this was just the prelude to the massacre of Gladstone City.

As he thought, soon after, they came across the body of the young and beautiful lady teacher Vera. She wore only a thin gauze nightdress, most likely having escaped from her room hastily after hearing the commotion. But the Dark Elves had caught up to her.

The Dark Elves didn't appreciate her beauty. Her smooth, flat belly had a stab wound in it. Her body lay twisted on the ground. She was still alive and breathing, blood gushing out of the wound in her abdomen. Her nightdress soaked up the blood. It looked no different from a bewitching, bloody-red rose at first sight.

As if hearing them, her beautiful eyes sought the source of the noise, glowing strangely with a strong will to live.

She was still young, less than 30 years old. With her strong magical talents, she was

already a Level-2 Conjurer. Her future held much promise, and her beauty was well-known throughout the academy.

She didn't want to die; her life had only just begun!

But her injury was fatal. No one could save her. Link was helpless.

Seeing corpses was one thing, but seeing someone on the brink of death was completely different—especially since that someone was a beloved teacher, struggling to live. It was too much.

Link's pupils constricted. The hand holding Celine's tightened.

In that moment, it suddenly struck him that he could never return to Earth. In the future, he would be just one amongst the countless creatures of the World of Firuman, struggling to survive in the Darkness.

I'm not a game player just watching from the sidelines anymore. I'm one of them. He'd really been disadvantaged by the God of Light!

Celine sensed Link's feelings. She was much calmer than he was. Patting his hand lightly, she sighed, "She was hurt too badly. We can't save her."

Link nodded, his heart heavy. Walking up to the lady teacher, he lifted his wand and used 2 Mana Points for the Spell of Slumber on her.

He couldn't save her. The least he could do was to let her leave in peace.

Under the Spell of Slumber, Vera slowly closed her eyes. Her body stopped writhing.

In another few steps, they saw the elderly Mr. Wilson. His head had been chopped right off. It lay ten feet away from his body.

All of them had been good people. Seeing them, Link felt the cruel reality of the war between Light and Dark. War was like a scythe, reaping lives like a harvest, it took a large patch of them with just one swing.

"What a dark, terrible world." Link felt sorrow in his heart and sighed deeply.

After the garden was a small forest. There were few trees in it, but they were huge.

Each was more than 200 years old. A small path pierced through the wooded area, with lit street lamps every now and then that made it look like those of the High Elves.

This had been the favorite meet-up place for the couples of the Magic Academy.

But as Link walked through the woods, he counted six corpses sprawled out on the path, all lovers who had been meeting up late at night.

Tonight, these woods had become the final resting place for these couples.

"These Dark Elves are such a disgusting pack of Hell-Spawns!" Celine's face was full of disgust.

Link stopped walking abruptly. He took a step back and wrapped Celine in his arm, a large hand clasped over her mouth as he pulled her behind one of the ancient trees.

"Shhh."

Celine's beautiful eyes fluttered. She didn't say a word.

After a while, they saw a squad of Dark Elves run past them towards the direction of the Apprentice's Dorm.

There were at least 30 Magician's Apprentices in the dorm. These Dark Elves were going to annihilate them.

In a small voice, Celine asked, "Link, are we going to save them?"

Link shook his head almost imperceptibly. He couldn't. Celine understood. Her bright eyes danced. "Then why did you save me?" she asked.

Link paused before answering, "We're friends, are we not?"

Unexpectedly, his answer made the maiden's eyes light up. "You're a good friend. Can I ask you a question?"

"Go on."

"How did you learn so many spells in such a short time? And use them so well at that?" Her eyes burned with curiosity.

"I... perhaps you could say it's a revelation from God. When I woke up, something else was in my head," Link replied, mincing his words.

"Oh, that's how it is." Celine's gaze wandered. She didn't poke any further. Pointing at the Portal Tower, she said crisply, "Then let's go."

The squad of Dark Elves had passed. Link nodded and went on with Celine.

Passing through the woods, they scurried through the shadows in the Passage of Truth for about 30 yards before they took a left. They had arrived at the Portal Tower.

The Portal Tower had been very expensive to build. It was small, and could only send physical objects to no more than 6 miles away. Even so, such a tower had cost more than ten thousand gold pieces to build. That was half of what Gladstone City collected in taxes each year.

The building might've been costly, but it was very useful. It wasn't intended for treasures, but rather, information. It could send materials to much further locations, even places more than 300 miles away. It was extremely useful in that sense.

It was because of this that the Dark Elves also placed a lot of importance on the Portal Tower. Link saw three strong Dark Elf Warriors standing before the tower. He would have to face them.

They were guarding the Portal Tower from harm. If Link's memory served him right, a Dark Elf Magician would arrive soon. The Elf Magician would then use the Portal Tower to transmit a detailed report back to the Dark Elf Army stationed 30 miles away.

One of the three Warriors held a shield full of runes. The Warrior had wrapped himself in anti-magic armor from head to toe, not even exposing his face.

Link's pupils constricted. He knew this Warrior. In his last life on Earth, he had met the Warrior during his Escape Mission.

The Warrior was called Jiggs. He was the commander of the ambush on the Magic Academy. A Level-3 Warrior with Battle Aura, he knew many powerful Battle Skills. Covered entirely by anti-magic armor, he could completely disregard any direct spell attacks below Level-3.

In the game, he had been known as The Magician Slayer. All beginner Magicians

finding their way out of Gladstone City avoided him like the plague.

The two Warriors flanking him were his subordinates, they both were Level-2. Although their gear wasn't as good as Jiggs' was, their anti-magic properties weren't weak either.

Now, Link had 18 Omni Points and 7 Mana Points. Engaging three powerful Dark Elf Warriors with that alone seemed impossible.

But he had no choice.

Taking a deep breath, Link purchased two new Level-0 Spells.

After that, he spent another 3 Omni Points on 30 Maximum Mana Points. He now had a Maximum Mana of 61 with 37 Mana Points. As for Mana Speed Recovery, he was short of time and had no use for it now.

He was left with 13 Omni Points after making his preparations.

Throwing a look at Celine to indicate that she should continue hiding in the bushes, Link walked out from the shadows on his own, letting the silver moonlight expose his form.

Link, who had been concentrating on observing his opponents, hadn't notice Celine open her mouth as if about to speak, then stop herself. The beautiful maiden decided to stay back in the shadows.

Never mind, that silly boy, she thought. I'll help him out as the situation progresses.

In that moment, Link saw only his opponents.

He waved his wand in greeting. "Hey, you pariah elves, what are you doing?"

He hadn't spoken loudly, but the three Dark Elves heard him quite clearly. They turned their heads simultaneously, fixing their bright red eyes on him.

# Chapter 7

## Who's the Toy Here?

The young Magician who had popped out of nowhere rather confused Jiggs.

Truth be told, the operation on the Magic Academy had been far too easy. The Magicians here had been raised in ivory towers. Their spellcasting had been artless, like children learning to walk.

Honestly, Jiggs felt a little disappointed.

The Magician who guarded the Portal Tower had a sea of knowledge and Mana flowing within him. He'd been able to cast Level-4 Spells, but Jiggs had finished him off within just two seconds.

One charge, a shield strike, and a quick swipe of his blade. That was all it took. It had been so easy; it was almost distasteful.

A Magician who had no idea how to fight with magic—it was inexplicable. A Magician like that wouldn't have even lasted a day in the Black Forest.

The young man who stood before him didn't look a day over 20. He was probably one of the academy's Apprentices. But compared to the teachers Jiggs had already faced, what could possibly be special about their students?

Because of that, Jiggs didn't act immediately. He just snorted and laughed coldly, "Young man, do you think that you're invincible just because you've learned a few days of magic? Look at him. He's probably been dabbling in magic longer than you've even lived."

Jiggs kicked the corpse by his feet. Link recognized it. It was Master Phil, one of the academy's only Level-4 Magicians. He had been 50 years old this year, with 30 years of experience in magic. Indeed, he had learned magic much, much longer than Link had been alive.

"The strength of a person's magic doesn't just depend on how long they've studied it.

Talent is more important! You pariahs, I'll show you what real magic looks like!"

Link's voice was calm and cold. As he spoke, he lightly and discreetly tapped his foot on the ground. No one noticed his little trick.

"Hahaha. Then let me see your so-called talent. Sherman, go and cut his head off for me!" Jiggs ordered, pointing to one of his subordinates.

"As you wish!"

The Dark Elf Warrior Sherman carried his shield and walked towards Link. Twenty paces away, he suddenly set his shield in front of him and charged at the young Magician.

Lesser Charge

Battle Skill

Effect: A warrior can use a special breathing technique to gain explosive strength throughout his body. For a short period, they will gain unimaginable speed. It is highly recommended for use against Magicians.

The Dark Elf Warrior was incredibly fast. His body raced through the air with a loud fwoosh.

What was worse, he held an anti-magic shield, and so magic couldn't hurt him directly. When he reached Link, he would be able to cut down the Magician's head with just one swing of his sword.

Yes, just one swing!

From the shadows, Celine had her wand extended at the ready, a darkness emanating from its tip. The young man was in danger. She couldn't just stand by any longer.

In the next moment, however, she withdrew her wand.

The reason was very simple—Sherman hadn't managed to reach Link.

Halfway there, Sherman had reached his maximum speed. But each subsequent step he took was a struggle, leaving a deep footprint on the ground. The ground pushed

against him, stopping him from moving forward.

Just five paces away from his target, he found that the hard, solid ground had become very soft. He couldn't push off of it.

Not only was he unable to continue forward, but because his foot had struck the ground with such strength, his entire leg sunk into the ground.

He had been charging forward at lightning speed, a minimum of 60 feet per second. With one leg in the ground and the other still on solid ground, at such a high velocity, they heard a resounding crack—it was the sound of Sherman's pelvic bone shattering.

The worst had yet to come. The soft spot between his legs fell astride the solid ground!

He had been charging forward with all his might, and the momentum had carried on into his fall. There was a squelch. Something else had broken.

A shattered pelvis and a fatal blow to the groin—the pain was intolerable!

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!!!! Ahhhhhhhh!!! Ahhhhhhhhhhh!!!" Sherman screamed with all the breath his lungs would allow. Anyone could hear the agony in his voice.

After letting out a couple more screams, the Warrior's head dropped to the side. He had passed out due to the sheer amount of pain.

The warrior Sherman had been ruined with just one little spell.

Mud Marsh

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Transform solid ground into soft mud.

(Note: Do not step on it! Especially not when it's hard! Stepping on it while running at high speeds is absolutely forbidden! Or else bear the consequences.)

"Hmmm?" Jiggs finally started to take his opponent seriously. Looking at Sherman's tragic state, his eyes narrowed in on Link.

"Apprentice, you've made me very angry!"



The Magician before him was a very low level. He hadn't crushed Sherman because of his strength, but because they had been careless.

But now, Jiggs was serious.

Pulling out the sword that hung by his waist, Jiggs gave orders to the Warrior next to him. "Terry, guard the Portal Tower. I will deal with this little thing myself."

"Yes, Commander." Terry retreated to the side. He knew that Jiggs would never gang up with him on a young Magician like that. Such was the pride of a powerful soldier.

Jiggs walked forward slowly, swinging his sword in the air languidly.

The black, heavy shield he carried glowed a soft white, made more obvious by the dark of the night. That was the Battle Aura that only Level-3 Warriors could have.

Then, he strolled towards Link as if he were leisurely walking through a park.

"Fireball!" Link growled.

A marble-sized white ball of flame appeared. It shot towards Jiggs.

Jiggs lifted his shield. With a small bang, the fireball collided with it, scattering into a cloud of futile sparks, not even causing the white glow of the shield to flicker.

Level-0 magic was too weak. A Level-3 Warrior could easily defend himself from such attacks.

As if confirming Link's thoughts, Jiggs said, "If that is all your magic can do, then you needn't put up a struggle. Just stretch your neck out and let me cut you down."

Fully clad in anti-magic armor, Jiggs seemed undefeatable, like a battle tank.

In the dark, Celine stretched her wand out again. This Jiggs was an experienced warrior, and he had Battle Aura. She found it impossible to believe that Link could defeat someone like that.

She had to help.

In the next moment, Link attacked again.

The New Moon Wand in his hand flitted up and tapped the air before him. In that instant, he looked just like a music conductor with a baton.

With each tap of his wand, a white ball of flame appeared. In that one second, Link tapped the wand nine times!

Within that one second, Link had taken 0.1 seconds to produce each Fireball, displaying his quick spellcasting abilities.

Something even more incredible happened.

The nine fireballs flew out simultaneously. Each followed a different trajectory, spinning in random patterns, but with a common goal – the Warrior Jiggs.

The fireballs landed in different areas. Some landed on Jiggs' chest, others whipped behind him and landed on the seam between his helmet and the armor on his neck. Others even crashed into the eye openings of his helmet.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! The fireballs exploded in rapid succession. Some flames managed to seep into the seams, succeeding in dealing some damage to Jiggs.

"Damn it, your little tricks have brought my patience to an end!" Jiggs raised his voice. The fireballs were a real nuisance, and they were actually dealing some damage.

With Sherman's tragedy before him, Jiggs did not dare charge forward so easily. He instead jogged towards Link.

Link's magic wand flitted around in the air again.

Fwoosh. Another nine fireballs appeared, shooting out in random patterns again, landing with frightening accuracy onto the seams of Jiggs' armor.

Jiggs had learned his lesson. He didn't slow down his pace even as he shielded his face from the tiny flames.

The Fireball's power was limited though. Even if Jiggs' other parts were hit directly, protected by Battle Aura, the worst he could get was a light burn. The burns would probably heal within an hour or two. What was important was that his eyes didn't get hurt.

Bang, bang, bang! The fireballs exploded again. Even though they didn't do Jiggs any harm, the force of their blasts still made Jiggs feel somewhat cornered.

"This damned Magician's Apprentice. I will crush his head between my hands!" Jiggs' blood boiled as his pace quickened.

Even a saint would get angry at such attacks.

The Mana in Link's body had almost been depleted by his use of the Fireballs. But he still had 13 Omni Points left. He used one of them to replenish 10 Mana Points. Then, while Jiggs was still trying to protect himself from the fireballs, Link used a different spell.

"Grease!"

Grease

Level-0 Spell

Effect: The ground will become very, very slippery. Just like it's been covered in oil.

Within a split second, the ground beneath Jiggs became as slippery as ice.

Jiggs had been running at a jog, covering his face with his shield and fuming because of the constant barrage of fireballs. His anger and impatience led to his downfall.

It was important to never lose one's cool in battle because it could lead to poor decisions.

Jiggs had noticed the change in the ground. But he had been more afraid of the mud from the Mud Marsh spell, so he made his footsteps lighter.

He slipped as a result, his expectations opposite of the outcome. Jiggs was alarmed and tense, he was unable to keep his balance any longer. The heavy armor he wore made him all the more clumsy. All he saw was the sky as he fell backward.

Here, we need to elaborate a little on armor.

No armor covered its joints with metal. In fact, such parts needed to be made with soft, supple leather to facilitate body movements, especially around the crotch area.

Like a turtle onto its back, Jiggs fell over, exposing his groin -- a weakness that was never seen when he stood upright.

But now, it was fatal.

"Purchase spell: Vector Throw!" Link muttered.

Vector Throw

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Throw an object at high speed. The lighter the object, the faster it will be.

Link was very familiar with this spell. If he threw a stone weighing 2 pounds, the spell could bring its velocity up to 160 feet per second.

A 2-pound stone, at 160 feet per second. If it were to smash onto a delicate area like the groin... the outcome of such a thing, one couldn't even bear to think about.

Purchasing the spell as fast as he could, he pointed his wand towards the ground.

"Go!" he shouted.

Controlled by magic, a rock about the size of a fist flew out in a smooth arc, landing smack dab in the middle of the only unprotected area of Jiggs' armor-covered body.

Bam! A muffled thud rang out. Despite the sound not being loud, it was still worth the concern because of where the rock had landed.

How painful that must be!

"Guhhh." Jiggs let out a snort that sounded just like a strangled animal.

Only then did he slam onto the ground. He let go of his shield and clutched at his crotch, writhing on the ground.

He didn't know how badly his genitals had been injured, but the pain was excruciating. Worse, he couldn't even feel down there anymore, as if it had been smashed to a pulp.

Pain, fear, panic, all kinds of emotions clamored within him. He had long since

forgotten about defending himself, not even maintaining the Battle Aura that protected him against magic.

"Earth Spike!"

Link dealt the finishing blow.

From the spot on the ground that corresponded to the joint between Jiggs' helmet and neck armor, rose a spike of stone, two feet tall. It pierced the joint in Jiggs's armor, impaling his defenseless neck.

Jiggs was dead!

The Warrior Terry could not believe his eyes.

The commander had been killed, by someone from afar, who hadn't even moved throughout the entire fight, using only low-level magic tricks.

How was this possible?

In the shadows, Celine's mouth gaped.

Using Level-1 Spells to kill a Level-3 Warrior who was literally wrapped in armor from head to toe was unheard of!

Tssk-tssk. Perfect timing, impressive spellcasting skills, and a formidable grasp of the human psyche and behavior, Celine thought. This warrior was toyed with to his death! Celine had sharp eyes. She had seen everything, including the play of emotions between them.

It was because she had seen everything that she was shaken up.

# Chapter 8

## His Choice

Two of the three powerful Dark Elf Warriors were brought down in the blink of an eye.

Link had no idea what anyone else thought. He was just relieved that he had managed to kill Jiggs.

Part of it had been his own strength, but it was also thanks to Jiggs' arrogance and the fact that he underestimated Link. Subconsciously, the Warrior had thought that he could crush the young Magician like a bug, never once seeing Link as an equal.

In other words, he was too reckless.

Now, Link was left with 2 Omni Points and 5 Mana Points. Without hesitating, he changed all the Omni Points he had into Mana Maximum Points. His Maximum Mana became 81 Points, with 25 Mana Points.

The Mana he had was more than enough for him to handle the Dark Elf Warrior named Terry.

Link turned to look at Terry. He pointed his wand at the elf, the tip glimmering with magic.

Link was waiting for him to attack.

The elf was just a Level-2 Warrior. As long as he attacked first, his weaknesses would be apparent. Link would use that to give him a fatal blow, just like he had done for Sherman and the Commander, Jiggs.

Terry gulped and took a few steps back. Out of the blue, he bolted, running for his life at full speed, disappearing into the dark within the blink of an eye.

Okay. It seems like his courage had fled with him.

This guy must have gone to call for help. I need to hurry! Link thought. Link

understood what Terry was thinking. After all, there were many Dark Elves in the Magic Academy.

He waved a hand at the shadows where Celine hid. "Let's go. We need to leave this place as soon as we can."

The Portal Tower was just in front of them. With no more enemies in their way, it was time to leave.

Celine walked out of the darkness, her sky-blue eyes shining with a strange light. Smiling, she said, "Link, you use magic so well. Better than almost anyone I know."

Her face held no fear, only admiration.

Her response was a little strange though. The way she squinted as she smiled, it made the feeling that Link had seen her before even stronger.

This Celine isn't just your average person. I must have seen her before, somewhere.

"Hey, what are you spacing out for? It's dangerous to dilly-dally here." Celine patted Link on his shoulder, bringing him back to his senses.

"Oh. Yes."

Time was of the essence. Link didn't ponder it any further and instead just followed Celine into the Portal Tower.

But as he watched her figure from the back, her round ass, her long legs, the poofy ponytail bouncing behind her, the graceful way her body swayed as she walked... Something cracked inside Link. He spaced out again.

He finally remembered.

Celine did look like someone he had known. More specifically, a demon he had known. A demoness NPC who had broken Link's heart in his last life!

The demoness' name had been Celine Flandre, also known as The Demon Princess. She was known for being one of the top four beauties in the game Legends.

Her mother was a human, but her father was the famous Demi-God, the Lord of the

Deep, Nozama. The very same Demi-God that had fought Link to his death. According to the latest update in the game, in order to kill the final boss, one needed to complete an extremely difficult mission. And the one who had posted the mission had been none other than Celine Flandre.

As a half-demon, Celine Flandre was tremendously talented. At a young age, she was already a Legendary Great. The Lord of the Deep, Nozama, hating the fact that such a daughter was lost to him within the Mortal Realm, had sent his demon lackeys after her. To achieve that, Nozama had even killed Celine's human mother.

From then on, Celine and her demon father had become sworn enemies. Escaping from her father's clutches ever since childhood, she only began to fight back when forced into a corner by Nozama himself, who had entered the World of Firuman.

"I couldn't choose the circumstances of my birth, but I can choose my own path!"

"My father? Huh! He's just a turd of The Deeps!"

"I swear that I'll kill him!"

"Oh, Link. You really are an amusing Magician. Honestly, I think I may have fallen in love with you. Heehee. You didn't believe me, did you?"

"Silly. I love to watch you mortals and your silly, dumbfounded expressions."

Celine Flandre's every word from his last life echoed in Link's head. Her every laugh was carved into his heart.

Even though she was only an NPC, the game company had created her character especially well. Her pain, her determination, her love of pranks, her breathtaking features, and that sweet but mischievous charm of hers. Everything about her fascinated Link.

For a long time, Link had harbored the illusion that she, although just an NPC, had been real.

Link snapped back to his senses very quickly.

He knew that this Celine was most likely a different one from that famous Demon Princess. The woman from his memory had eyes black like the night sky, a head full of



thick black hair, cute little fangs, the tips of which were just vaguely visible against her red lips, and two little nubs of horns on her forehead. But this Celine had golden hair and green eyes. They were completely different people.

I must be mad, Link thought, spacing out because of her at a time like this. She's just an NPC from the game. She may exist in this world as well, but her and the Celine in front of me are definitely not the same people.

Shoving his thoughts of her into the deepest crevices of his mind, Link continued to follow Celine into the Portal Tower.

There was a large hall in the tower. The floor of the hall had been inscribed with tons of runes. There were four obelisks around the hall, white light flowed around their tips.

The Portal Tower was a small one. There was only one portal rune and it could only transport one person at a time.

Looking at the portal rune, Link remembered the mission he had been given by the gaming system.

Stop the signal. Stop the Dark Elves from using the tower to contact the rest of Dark Elf Army outside the city. The objective of this mission was very clear—delay the arrival of the Dark Elf Army.

Perhaps it could only delay them for an hour or two, but that time was especially precious because this had been an ambush. Each second that the Dark Elves lost could mean an unexpected turn of events for Gladstone City.

Initially, Link had intended to forfeit the mission. But on his way here, he had seen countless tragedies. Now, he hesitated.

Maybe, just maybe, I should destroy this tower after all. If I do so, I may be able to save a lot of people, he thought.

Celine's voice rang out. "Hey, is something wrong? Why do you keep spacing out? Hurry, I'm ready to go. Follow after me."

She was already standing on the portal rune.

Link raised his head to look at her. The beautiful face before him seemed to blend with the face of the Demon Princess, striking Link's heart.

Yes, the Portal Tower must be destroyed. Only then will the Dark Elves be unable to go after Celine via the Portal Tower. And I, will gain 20 Omni Points. I will definitely be able to find another way to escape Gladstone City!

Link finally made up his mind. He would complete the mission and destroy the Portal Tower.

Of course, he wouldn't tell Celine anything. He had the feeling that once he did, she would stay back to face everything with him. That was too dangerous.

He smiled. "I was just thinking over a complicated magic question. You go ahead. I'll follow after you. I'll activate the portal rune for you."

Activating the portal rune was a simple task. He just had to channel some Mana into the rune.

Link tapped the portal rune with his wand. The four obelisks around the hall each shot out a white beam of light at the cornerstone portal rune carved on the ceiling. The huge rune was activated. White light beamed down from it, enveloping Celine within the countless formless runes that flitted within the pillar of light.

Celine's form was drowned out by the blinding white light. When it died out, she was gone.

With his weakness gone, Link heaved a sigh of relief.

He activated the Portal Tower again, the light on the obelisk appearing once more. But this time, there was no-one waiting on the portal rune.

Link then turned and ran out of the hall. When he was about 100 feet out, the imposing rune on the ceiling beamed the white pillar of light down once more.

In that moment, Link turned and shot a Fireball at the portal rune.

The Portal Tower was an intricate product of magic. Destroying it was easy—it only needed a little Level-0 Spell to throw the Mana within it into chaos.

Magic was forbidden within 100 feet of the Portal Tower. It was taboo within the Magic Academy!

Bang!

The white fireball collided with the portal rune, shattering it into countless little particles of light. The particles were then converted back into pure Mana. At the same time, a beam of light descended down onto it. Thrown into disarray by the unexpected burst of Mana, the rune on the ceiling exploded with a loud boom.

The explosion started a huge chain reaction. The immense Mana contained within the tower was thrown into turmoil.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The Portal Tower radiated with Mana—it was blinding. White, gold orbs of light rose up and disappeared into the air, wildly and uncontrollably releasing Mana. In the sheer chaos of it all, many cracks appeared on the outer wall of the Portal Tower. More runes were torn apart, releasing more waves of magical energy.

Within the blinding flashes of light and a tremendous boom, the Portal Tower collapsed into a pile of rubble.

Link was far away by then. He returned to the small woods from earlier and hid in the shadows of one of the ancient trees. Once again, he cloaked himself with a spell of Lesser Invisibility.

All the activity going on at the Portal Tower caught the attention of the Dark Elf Assassins. All of them knew the significance of the tower, and they ran towards it, or at least, the ruins of it.

Hiding in the shadows, Link heard the game server's notification even as he watched the Dark Elves run past him.

Mission: Stop the Signal, completed.

Gamer Link receives 20 Omni Points.

Part Three of Mission: Escape

Mission details: Escape the Dark Elf Assassins' pursuits.

Mission reward: 20 Omni Points

Looking at the mission contents, Link smiled bitterly. The city was full of Dark Elf Assassins. He had killed the Dark Elf Commander Jiggs and destroyed the Portal Tower. More importantly, he had let the Warrior Terry escape. Link was definitely their main target.

The entire academy of Dark Elf Assassins would certainly be searching for him. No, not just the Dark Elf Assassins. In a while, a Dark Elf Magician would be arriving to use the Portal Tower. Since the Portal Tower was now in ruins, that Magician would join in on the search as well.

Remembering the Magician he had come across in the game, Link's smile grew more bitter.

That Dark Elf Magician wasn't like the soft Magicians of the Magic Academy. That was a true Battle Mage, a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council of the Black Forest, a Level-2 Elite!

Luckily, Link thought, I have 20 Omni Points. And I don't need to kill them. I just need to run away from them. I still have a chance.

...

Gladstone City, the suburbs.

In the darkness of the night, a white light flashed. A human form appeared out of thin air. It was Celine.

She moved to the side and waited patiently.

Half a minute passed, but no light appeared. One full minute passed, and a blinding white light appeared. Not in the suburbs, but at the Magic Academy in the distance.

Celine stared. Seeing the continuous flashes of light and feeling the enormous Mana waves emanating from there, she guessed what had happened right away. She understood what Link had done.

"He didn't come. He destroyed the Portal Tower, afraid that the Dark Elves would come after me through the portal. But now, I am safe, and he is in danger!"

In that moment, Celine felt her chest grow tight.

"You go ahead. I'll follow you. I'll activate the portal rune for you." The young man had been smiling as he said it.

His smile appeared in her mind, as clear as day.

"Fool! Idiot! Moron! I didn't need you to save me!" Celine stomped her foot. She made up her mind. "This won't do. I need to get him out of there."

She had grown up in loneliness. Other than her mother, no one had ever been so good to her!

# Chapter 9

## The Dark Elf Magician – Holmes

Hiding in the shadow of a tree, Link did his best to steady his breath. He wondered how he could possibly escape from the Dark Elves.

20 Omni Points. I'll spend 9 of them on Mana Speed Recovery first, Link said to himself.

If all went well, he would be able to just avoid them. If he could replenish his Mana quickly, the longer he dodged them, the more Mana he would recover and the safer he would be.

His Mana Recovery Speed became 9.2 Points per hour with the 9 Omni Points he had spent on Mana Speed Recovery. He now had a Maximum Mana of 91 Points, and 23 Mana Points. If only he could hide from the Dark Elves for seven more hours, then his Mana would be refilled completely.

With his Mana full, he could easily use the six Level-0 Spells and two Level-1 Spells he knew. Even if something were to happen, leaving him with no choice other than to fight, with those spells he was confident that he would be able to escape.

He heard voices coming from the ruins of the tower. The Dark Elves were engaged in a heated discussion.

Everyone from the Magic Academy had been wiped out by now, leaving most of the Dark Elves free to gather around the Portal Tower. This would be the best time to escape from the academy.

Link thought about it and came to a decision.

Purchase Spell: Silence.

Silence

Level-0 Spell

Effect: Reduces the noise emitted by the bearer, including footsteps, breathing and speaking. The spell's effect lasts for 20 minutes each time it's cast.

After purchasing it, Link felt the familiar haziness wash over him. When it was gone, he had mastered the Level-0 Spell.

Link recited the Spell of Silence in his mind, using it right away.

At this time, the Mana around the Portal Tower had already settled down and the flashes of light had died out. The Magic Academy once again sank into darkness.

With the spells of Lesser Invincibility and Silence cloaking him, Link moved as discreetly as a shadow. He stood up, avoiding the streetlights and followed the path back by memory. He walked towards the back door of the Magic Academy.

The Dark Elf Assassins hadn't noticed anything as he slipped past them. Link managed to escape the Academy.

The Magic Academy had been built in Gladstone City's Flower District. It was a gathering point for the city's upper-class citizens—most of them even lived there.

That was the reason why so many Dark Elf Assassins assembled throughout this area.

But in contrast to the Assassins in the Magic Academy, the Dark Elves here had specific targets: the prominent figures of the Flower District. Their mission was clear, and so they wouldn't go around just killing every person they saw.

As long as Link didn't get exposed as a Magician, he would probably be safe even if he was discovered.

In that moment, Link felt extremely grateful that he was wearing a normal, gray robe. With his average features, and as long as he kept his wand hidden, he would look as common as common could be.

I should be safe before the news gets out about the Magic Academy. But I should be careful and get as far away from the academy as I can. No matter what, I need to leave this place before the Dark Elf Army arrives.

Link walked quickly, his luck seeming to be in his favor. Along with the help of the two spells he wore, he flitted through the shadows without running into any obstacles.

The Magic Academy, at the Portal Tower.

When Link left the Magic Academy, a crowd of Dark Elf Assassins stood around the ruins of the tower, unable to believe their eyes.

Commander Jiggs had died, and the Portal Tower had been destroyed. The prime location for their ambush on the Magic Academy had disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

"Terry, what do we do now?" a Dark Elf Assassin looked at Terry and asked, his voice raw.

Even though Terry had chosen to run rather than fight Link, with the death of Commander Jiggs, he was now the only highest ranking Dark Elf among those present.

Terry's heart was heavy. The Portal Tower had been crucial in their ambush of Gladstone City. If news of the successful assassination did not reach Marshal Lorde outside of the city, he would not dispatch his troops.

In addition, there was a possibility of the attack on Gladstone City being abandoned. If that happened, every single Dark Elf involved in the ambush would be severely punished according to military law. There might even be a mass execution by the furious Marshal.

"I think, that the only thing we can do now, is to avenge the Commander. Find that young, human Magician!" Terry sighed.

The Dark Elves exchanged looks with one another. The same Dark Elf asked again, "Could he have used the portal to get away?"

Terry shook his head. "Impossible. No one can use a portal on the verge of collapse. Not unless he has a deathwish. He must have escaped after destroying the Portal Tower. If I'm not mistaken, he should be hiding in some dark corner of the Magic Academy."

"We'll find him!"

The Dark Elf Assassins scattered in all directions, determined to search each and every nook and cranny of the academy.

The academy wasn't large. Its circumference was only about 1000 feet. There weren't



many places one could hide in such a place. There were at least 200 Dark Elf Assassins searching for Link. Within less than half an hour, they had torn through each and every corner of the school, to no avail.

Half an hour later, the Assassins gathered around the Portal Tower once again.

"We didn't find him. He's escaped!" one of them reported.

"If he's escaped from the Magic Academy, he's likely in a disguise, and we have no way of finding him now. It's a pity we didn't bring the hounds from the Black Forest.

Terry frowned deeply. He felt helpless.

Just then, a cold voice rang out from the darkness beside them. "What is going on here? Why is the Portal Tower in ruins? Why is Jiggs dead?"

Heads turned to the source of the interruption. They saw a middle-aged Dark Elf dressed in a black robe with silver trim, holding an ebony staff as tall as he was. He stood at the gate of the enclosure around the tower.

A pair of Dark Elf Warriors fully clad in armor followed closely behind him.

The Dark Elf Assassins straightened their backs at the sight of the newly arrived elf. "Master Holmes," they all said in unison.

Holmes, he was a Level-2 Battle Mage and a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council. He was well known for having single-handedly defeated three Elite Assassins from the Norton Kingdom. Not only did he slay them, but he also left the battle completely unscathed.

In the plans for the ambush of Gladstone City, he had been tasked with activating the Portal Tower and sending a detailed report back to the Dark Elf Army 30 miles away.

For his safety, he was only supposed to enter the tower after the Magic Academy had been cleared out.

The academy had been cleared, but the crucial Portal Tower had been destroyed as well. What was the point of him coming here?

"What on earth happened here?" Holmes barked. He looked at Jiggs' corpse and strode

up to it, crouching down to examine his wounds.

"A Level-0 Earth Spike? Was he killed by a Magician's Apprentice!?" For the life of him, Holmes just couldn't understand what was going on.

A Level-3, fully-armored Dark Elf Warrior with Battle Aura had actually been defeated by a single Earth Spike. It was a disgrace to the Dark Elf Warriors!

No, a disgrace to all Dark Elves!

"I demand an explanation!" Holmes' voice was as sharp as knives.

Terry took a deep breath and stepped forward. "Lord, it happened like this."

He began to describe what he had seen. He told every detail, from the young human Magician's appearance to every word Commander Jiggs had said. He recited every response and explained every attack. He left nothing out.

He spoke in simple but descriptive words. As the Dark Elves listened, the battle scene was re-enacted in their minds. They saw a young, powerful, composed human Magician.

His magic had been like a web of death. The moment he appeared, the web had begun to weave. Each spell had been a thread, binding his prey and ultimately suffocating them.

When Terry had finished, the Dark Elves all shivered. They could never have imagined that such a formidable character had been hiding in the Lower Magic Academy.

At the same time, they rejoiced that they hadn't encountered that dangerous Magician themselves. They knew that they wouldn't have been able to stand there listening to Terry's tale otherwise.

Holmes' face was dark. He was a Magician and therefore knew better than anyone else here how dangerous this human counterpart was.

Nine Level-0 Spells within just one second. Precise magic control. What spellcasting skill!

Two barrages of Fireballs to rile Jiggs up, and a Grease Spell to make Jiggs vulnerable,

and finally finishing it all with a Vector Throw. Thinking of the intricate planning of the battle had him in a cold sweat.

"This is a master tactician!" Holmes concluded.

He made up his mind then and there. "He has achieved so much at such a young age. If he is allowed to grow, he will become a large threat! We must kill him!"

"But Lord, he has already escaped from the Magic Academy."

"But he's left his scent. He will have left footprints, all of which can be tracked."

Holmes laughed coldly. The fiery-red crystal on his staff glowed brightly. A beam of Mana shot onto the ground, causing the earth to bulge out and writhe, finally taking the form of a 6-foot tall hound.

Earth Hound

Level-2 Spell

Effect: Condenses earth elements into a gigantic hound. The hound's strength knows no bounds. Its eyesight and sense of smell are exceptional.

(Note: Don't ever let an Earth Hound get a hold of your scent!)

Where the Earth Hound's eyes should have been instead sat round black holes. When it had fully taken shape, Holmes pointed towards Jiggs' corpse. "Find the killer!"

The hound pounced onto Jiggs' body, sniffing furiously.

After about ten seconds, the hound let out a howl, then turned and darted out towards the outside of the Magic Academy. It sniffed the ground even as it ran.

"You, and you. Send this report back to Marshal Lorde at the camp outside the city!" Holmes passed a scroll to the Dark Elf Assassin. He could only rely on the Assassins to deliver the report on foot since the Portal Tower had been destroyed.

"Yes, Lord." The Assassin took the scroll and vanished into the night.

"The others, follow me!" ordered Holmes.

# Chapter 10

## The MI3 (Mission Intelligence, Section 3)

The situation in the Flower District was much better than the Magic Academy's. Very few had actually been killed.

Though there were many Dark Elf Assassins in the city, they were very few in number compared to Gladstone City's population of more than 100,000.

The loud noises from the Magic Academy had startled many of the Flower District's residents. There were usually few people on the streets at such a late hour, but tonight, the streets were packed.

Every now and then, shrill screams and wails rang out from the grand mansions. Those were probably the reactions to the assassinated corpses being discovered.

Link continued walking on the streets for about a half an hour. He saw the chaos Gladstone City was in.

The noise and activity coming from the Magic Academy along with the assassination of the prominent figures of the city within the Flower District usually would have caused armed guards to show up and restore peace and order to the city. But now, there was neither a trace nor a shadow of them.

The officers in the city watch must have also been killed. Link sighed and carried on his way.

People continued to flood the streets. In addition to the attack initiated by the Dark Elves, robberies, and even acts of rape began to ring out throughout the city. In the absence of the city watch, the criminals that usually hid within the city's shadows had all come out to wreak havoc.

After about 20 minutes, the Lesser Invincibility and Silence cloaking him wore out. But he wasn't afraid of being seen. He had blended into the crowd.

In front of him, a middle-aged man in tatters rushed towards him with a dagger, eyes

glistening from within a vicious-looking face. He looked determined to rob Link.

Link continued to walk as he extended out his hand. The Mana within him surged into it, making it glow softly.

"Don't disturb me!" he barked quietly, ice coating his voice.

A Magician. The scruffy-looking middle-aged man froze with fear. He turned and ran, looking for another weaker victim.

To commoners, Magicians were mysterious and powerful. Angering them surely meant death.

It took more than half an hour for Link to travel through most of the Flower District. More and more people crowded onto the streets, making it even more chaotic than it was before. Some of the buildings had even caught fire, cries ringing out from inside them. Some people tried to help, but others still continued to loot and plunder.

"The law and order have collapsed." Link sighed. He could do nothing to help such a situation.

A little further off, he caught sight of a river. It wasn't wide, just about 60 feet across, but it had a small port. A few small boats were tethered to it.

This was one of the branches of the Gladstone River.

Something occurred to Link. He walked over and untied one of the boats. Jumping into it, he used the oar to push against the riverbank, letting the boat follow the currents down the river.

He did it to avoid being tracked by the Assassins from the Magic Academy.

The Dark Elf Magician who went to the Magic Academy will definitely search for me with tracking magic. But he's just a Level-2 Magician. He can only rely on scent, footprints and the like. Since I'm on a river, let's see how well he'll find me now!

Link hadn't come across the Dark Elf Magician in the game, but the game server in his last life had hosted many forums where players could discuss strategies and talk. He often browsed through whenever he was free, looking for hints just in case he encountered the feared Magician. Because of that, he was familiar with all the

powerful Dark Elves that had appeared during The Change of the Bloody Moon.

Link even remembered the Magician's name—Holmes.

Low-level Magicians' tracking wasn't much different from non-magicians'. This was why Link could use common means to evade them.

But if it had been a high-level Magician, able to track the scent of one's Mana, the scent of one's soul or worse, cast a Spirit Anchor, especially if it had been the latter, Link would have really been in danger.

Just over ten minutes had passed, during which Link had traveled about 1500 to 2000 feet. Link then saw another port. He rowed the boat towards the riverbank.

He didn't really know how to row a boat, but the currents weren't strong. He managed to dock the boat after some struggle.

Getting back on shore, he carried on on foot for a while, quickly reaching the Flower District's exit.

The exit led to the market area. It was busy by day, but quiet by night. This was because few people lived here, the rental prices being too high for the average citizen.

Tonight was the same. Other than some security guards outside the shops, there wasn't a soul in sight.

The oil lamps lining both sides of the streets had been extinguished leaving the streets in darkness. Cold gusts of wind blew from time to time, throwing the trash up into the air. It was the picture of desolation.

The city gates were just behind the market area. He could leave from there.

The Dark Elf Army will arrive soon. I'll get involved in the massacre if I stay in the city. I should leave now, while I still have the chance!

With that in mind, Link left the Flower District without looking back and walked through the market area.

Flicking his pocket watch open, it showed the time to be 11:36 pm. It was almost midnight. His Mana had recovered to 32 Points.

In the game, the Dark Elf Army had attacked the city at half past one in the early morning. There had been no one guarding the city. Worse, the Dark Elves had seized and opened the gates, allowing the entire army to just march on in.

And then, the massacre had begun. By the time dawn arrived, more than a 100,000 people had been killed in rituals performed by the Dark Elves. The tattered corpses were disposed of like trash in the Gladstone River. It had been a real catastrophe!

It was now half past eleven. He still had more than two hours to escape from Gladstone City. He had more than enough time—unless, God forbid, something happened.

The market area was too quiet. He would be too obvious walking down the street alone. Just in case, Link cloaked himself in the Spells of Silence and Lesser Invincibility.

Twenty minutes later, Link had reached the market square. Just as Link was about to cast the Spell of Silence again, he heard the sound of clashing weapons coming from an alley near him.

Someone's there! And they're fighting! Link went on the alert. It sounds like they're really at it. That's not the sound of gangsters fighting. Could it be a surviving Elite of the city?

Link followed the noises to their source.

The alley was quite deep and rather dark, the only source of light being the moon. Thankfully, it was a cloudless night. Still, even with the moonlight, Link was barely able to make out what was going on in the alley.

In front of him stood four figures, while one laid on the ground. Four living, breathing people and a corpse.

Of the four still left standing, three of them were clad in grayish-black leather armor, a defining feature of the Dark Elf Assassins. Their identities were obvious. They all surrounded the last remaining person.

He wore dark-green, leather armor. Though he was masked like the Dark Elf Assassins, his rounded ears betrayed his human identity.

The corpse on the ground was that of a Dark Elf Assassin. The human Warrior had evidently paid his price for killing the Dark Elf. Blood oozed and dripped from a long

gash on his left arm.

None of them spoke. They stood, watching each other in silence.

The three Assassins were obviously quite wary of their human counterpart. They watched his every move all while edging closer to him.

The human Assassin retreated slowly. But the alley ended in a brick wall behind him, that which he soon reached. With nowhere else to escape, he braced his back against the cold stone.

He held a dagger in each hand. From its luster, it didn't seem to have any anti-magic properties.

That was reasonable. Anti-magic weapons were extremely expensive, and not everyone managed to own one.

Just as they were about to break out into a fight, the human rasped, "Hehehe. The Portal Tower has been destroyed. Your plans are ruined!"

One of the Dark Elves replied, "Even without the Portal Tower, we still have homing crows. We can still send the news to our army waiting outside. It may just be delayed by a half an hour or so."

"Homing crows? Blood-eyed Owls patrol the skies of Gladstone City once night falls. They were bred to take care of homing crows and pigeons. How likely is it that your crows managed to make it out?" spat the human Assassin.

The elf couldn't deny it. It was true. "Our mission isn't sending the news out. Right now, our mission is to kill you. As an equal, I'll leave your corpse whole."

As he said that, the Dark Elf Assassin charged forward. His companions, too, attacked at the same time.

Three against one!

Link, eavesdropping from the mouth of the alley, had guessed the human Assassin's identity. The characteristic dark-green armor and the contents of their conversation all led him to one conclusion.



He's from the Military Intelligence, Section 3!

Military Intelligence, Section 3, otherwise known as MI3, was the intelligence agency of the Norton Kingdom. Its chief duty was to defend against the infiltrations of the Dark Elves in the East. Before The Change of the Bloody Moon, the Norton Kingdom and the Dark Elves of the Black Forest had maintained a peaceful façade. But behind it, their intelligence agencies warred with one another. However, the situation had never been as tense as it has been lately.

The MI3's counterpart in the Black Forest was known as The Death Hand. It was an organization of Dark Elf Assassins.

The Change of the Bloody Moon meant that MI3 had failed miserably in the information war.

From their short exchange, Link had gained a more comprehensive understanding of the situation in Gladstone.

Gladstone City may not be doomed to fall after all! Perhaps the Norton Kingdom did know of the Dark Elves' ambush. Maybe it hadn't been able to respond in time because the Dark Elves had attacked earlier than expected. If the Dark Elf Army is delayed, maybe we can save Gladstone City?

Once the thought came to him, he felt a jerk inside. New notifications appeared in his mind.

Completed Part Three of Mission: Escape.

Game player receives 20 Omni Points.

Unlock Part Four of Mission: A Helping Hand.

Mission Details: Help the Human Assassin in the market area to defeat the Dark Elf Assassins.

Mission Reward: 10 Omni Points.

Saving just one person could get him 10 Omni Points. There was no way Link would let such a good deal get past him. He accepted the mission without hesitating.

# Chapter 11

## Rescuing the Legendary Assassin

The gash on Ardivan's arm was very deep. It seemed to have cut a vessel, and not a minor one at that. Blood gushed out of it and the muscles in his arm spasmed, unable to hold onto any strength it still had.

Facing three Dark Elf Assassins from The Death Hand was a difficult task for him even at his best, let alone without the use of an arm.

Ardivan had already made up his mind to fight to the death when the three of them came at him.

"I've already killed one. I've covered my losses. Anymore are bonuses!"

He went all out, attacking viciously without caring for his wounds.

The Dark Elf Assassins, frightened by his savage way of fighting, exchanged just a few blows before one of them managed to make a cut across Ardivan's waist. But the Dark Elf Assassin didn't get away unscathed. Ardivan's dagger sliced deep into his arm. The dagger had teeth. When Ardivan pulled it back, the Dark Elf's arm was a bloody mess.

"Retreat! Let him bleed out!"

The three Dark Elf Assassins sprang back, leaving Ardivan gasping and heaving against the wall. Fighting on his own against three opponents, he had already done better than he had expected. At the same time, however, he had also used up a lot of his strength. The blood from his arm flowed more freely, and the cut on his waist also bled, soaking his underclothes in a warm red.

It hurt. Very much. He could feel his resolve trickling away with each drop he lost, but with his three opponents still keeping a close eye on him, he had no time to bandage his wounds.

Ardivan laughed wryly to himself. "I wonder how the Commander and the rest of them are now?"

Even before the Dark Elves had ambushed Gladstone City, the MI3 and the Death Hand had been covertly warring under their peaceful facade, more so than ever before. The situation had been intense.

The Death Hand had suddenly dispatched more operatives, leaving the MI3 outpost at Gladstone short-handed. In a moment of negligence, their scouts outside the city had been rooted out, sealing off all their communications with the outside world.

The MI3 and the city guards' homing pigeon lofts had been closed off or destroyed by the Dark Elves, leaving them useless. Only the secret pigeon loft in the marketplace held a possibility of being unharmed.

Under the cover of their Commander, the Assassins most skilled in the art of stealth broke past the Dark Elves. Ardivan was one of them. He had done his best to get to the market, had found the homing pigeons and had sent out news of what happened in Gladstone City.

The homing pigeons had all been sprayed with a special scent. They wouldn't get attacked by the Blood-eyed Owls. As long as nothing unfortunate happened, the news would reach the Black Iron Garrison in the South within an hour.

The Black Iron Garrison was the Norton Kingdom's first major stronghold to the north of Gladstone. The Kingdom's Iron Crusade Corps were stationed there. As long as the news reached them safely, the Army Marshal, Master Swordsman Allonse, would dispatch his troops to aid them immediately, ultimately saving Gladstone from ruin.

All that Gladstone City needed now was time.

I wonder who destroyed the academy's Portal Tower. It really was a blessing from God, Ardivan thought. He rejoiced.

Without receiving a detailed report from the Portal Tower, the Dark Elf Army in the North wouldn't dare to act rashly. To ensure that it arrived safely, the Dark Elf Assassins would have to send the report on foot. That would buy the troops from the Black Iron Garrison more time.

Too bad I won't live to see it. Ardivan sighed regretfully. He understood his opponents' plan; they wanted him to bleed out.

But he wouldn't just wait for death. Clenching his teeth, he roused himself and charged

at his opponents, swinging his dagger.

So long as he still had the strength, he would fight back with everything he had!

Naturally, the Dark Elf Assassins didn't back down at the challenge either. They too rushed back out towards Ardivan.

Right now, the Dark Elves and Ardivan only had each other in their sights. No one noticed what was going on behind them.

At a spot less than 100 feet away, a dark, hazy patch of shadow inched closer to the fight. It hid behind a pile of cartons.

100 feet. That was the furthest Link's Fireball could reach.

As Ardivan and the Assassins clashed once more, a dark figure darted out from the shadows, bearing flickers of magic.

"Fireball!"

As the shadowy figure revealed itself, so did three scorching fireballs. They shot out towards the Assassins' ears, traveling in a straight path, spitting and hissing as they flew.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Three explosions rang out through the air. All three of the Assassins were hit; they were completely caught off guard.

Although the fireballs weren't powerful, the explosions next to the elves' heads sent smoking air currents and flames into their ears, destroying important internal structures.

The Dark Elves felt sharp stabbing pain within their eardrums and their heads began to ring, leaving their senses muddled.

The inner ear was an organ that helped to maintain the body's equilibrium and stability. Whenever the ear is affected, humans too would become unstable. The anatomy and physiology of Dark Elves' ears were similar to that of humans', and so the elves were affected as well.

The Assassins' movements changed drastically. They stumbled around, unable to

maintain their balance.

Ardivan felt his spirits lift. Taking advantage of the situation, he slashed the throats of one of the Dark Elf Assassins. In a flash, he buried his dagger into the chest of the second. Finally, crouching down to duck from the useless attack of the last remaining Assassin, Ardivan leapt back up to thrust his dagger from below into the Assassin's left side.

Ardivan moved so quickly; this all happened in an instant. The three Dark Elf Assassins lay on the ground and only Ardivan alone was left standing, the final victor.

He pulled out his first-aid kit immediately. Taking a bandage from it, he wrapped his wounds, but he did not forget the Magician who had helped him.

He looked up towards the mouth of the alley. A young man in normal, gray robes walked towards him. There was nothing remarkable about his features. He held a magic wand in his hand and a magic bangle glistened on his wrist.

By the God of Light! It's my own kind, and a Magician at that! It couldn't get any better. Ardivan rejoiced within himself.

Magicians weren't particularly good at combat, but that wasn't their strong point! They excelled due to their wisdom and the various spells with myriads of uses that they had control over!

There were a lot of things that neither Assassins nor Warriors could do but that Magicians could achieve easily. Take flying for example. Any Level-3 Magician could fly. That alone was enough for them to leave the other classes in the dust, figuratively or not.

Now, Gladstone City was in extreme danger. If Ardivan had the help of a Magician, he would have a higher chance of delaying the Dark Elf Army's arrival.

The MI3 had originally thought of seeking aid from the Magic Academy, but by the time he had broken out of the throngs of Dark Elf Assassins, the entire academy had been wiped out.

Yet, he had managed to find a Magician in the marketplace. And from the Magician's spellcasting speed and his intuition in battle, he was obviously a Battle Mage.

There could be nothing better.

Quickly bandaging his wounds, Ardivan pulled out a Quick Healing Potion and chugged it down. Then he stood up and went over to the Magician. "Your honor, Sir Magician, my thanks for saving me. I am Ardivan, of the Military Intelligence, Section 3."

Afraid that the Magician wouldn't believe him, Ardivan pulled out a ring as proof. There were runes embedded all over the band, a lion embossing the signet. Behind the lion, a blade stretched out into a circle, forming the background. The lion represented the Norton Kingdom and the blade represented the MI3.

Link looked at the ring in Ardivan's hand. The magic flowing within the runes told him that it was probably a Level-1 Magic Ring. It was enchanted with the Level-1 Spell, Concealment.

Being the owner of such an enchanted ring meant that Ardivan was of considerable rank within the MI3.

At this point, Link had already completed his mission to save the human Assassin. As a result, he had received 10 Omni Points. In addition to that, he already had 20 Omni Points from the survival mission and an added 10 Points from his mission to destroy the Portal Tower. He now had at his disposal a total of 40 Omni Points, 26 Mana Points, seven Level-0 Spells and two Level-1 Spells.

Link's confidence grew with the resources he held.

Perhaps I really can change history and save Gladstone. The thought flickered through his mind but was struck down right away. I'll just take one step at a time. I'm facing the Dark Elf Army. I'll die a tragic death if I try to take on more than I can.

He was anxious to find out more about the situation in Gladstone. What he had to do now though, was to build some rapport and trust with the Assassin called Ardivan.

He saluted Ardivan with a Mage's salute and introduced himself. "I am Link Morani, third son of Viscount Hamilton Morani. I am also a Magician from The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. I just narrowly escaped from the academy."

"I destroyed the academy's Portal Tower before escaping." He threw that in as a bargaining chip.

At this, Ardivan's eyes lit up. He thanked Link from the bottom of his heart.

"Your Honor, Mr. Link, you have truly done us a great favor. But Gladstone City is still in danger. I beg you—"

Before he even finished, Link waved a hand in dismissal. "Time is of the essence. I know that the Dark Elf Army has troops waiting outside the city. No need for the formalities. Just say it, Assassin. What can I do for you?"

The destruction of the Portal Tower would definitely delay the arrival of the Dark Elf Army. In his last life, they had attacked the city at 1:30 pm. This time, they would be delayed by at least an hour. It was now 11:55 pm. He had a two-hour window of safety.

Within this time, earning some Omni Points by giving the MI3 a helping hand seemed like a good idea.

Not expecting Link to agree to his pleas so quickly, Ardivan paused. He was overjoyed. At such a perilous time, Link was exactly what they needed—decisive and brave in the face of danger.

His praise for Link was sincere and he meant it from the bottom of his heart. "Your honor, you truly are an upstanding Magician!"

Link was embarrassed. He waved a hand. "Stop all this nonsense."

Ardivan got down to business. "The outpost Commander distracted most of the Dark Elf Assassins in order for me to break free from their attacks. He's in grave danger right now. We have to help him and the rest of the troops!"

Ardivan looked at Link nervously. He wanted them to help, but there were only two of them. Anyone could see that this would be an extremely dangerous mission. Going to help the others was more likely going to result in their deaths.

Just as Ardivan finished talking, a notification appeared in Link's mind.

New mission triggered.

Mission: Help the MI3.

Mission Details:

1. Save and ensure the survival of Annie Abel, the commander of the MI3. (Main objective)
2. Save the remaining members of the MI3.

Mission Reward: 25 Omni Points.

Annie Abel?

The name was remarkably familiar to Link. She had been a famous character in the game. Her father was a duke of the Norton Kingdom, the younger brother of the King. He was a strong-willed man, also known as the Iron Duke. He held a very high status within the Kingdom.

Annie was his only daughter. She should have been a pampered princess, but instead, she became an Assassin, working from within the shadows. She worked her way up from the very bottom of the organization, making countless contributions. Ten years later, she became a Legendary Assassin, one of the three main decision makers within the MI3.

In the game, there had been another mission concerning her, but only a year later. The mission had been to rescue her from the Black Waters Prison in the Black Forest.

Yes, Annie Abel had not died in the massacre of Gladstone, instead, she had been captured. She received inhumane torture during her imprisonment.

In the game, when Link and his teammates had seen her in the Black Waters Prison, one of her eyes had been blinded for life. Her beautiful face was covered in a web of scars. And that had only been on the surface. Link didn't dare to imagine what else could have happened to her.

According to the latest news Link had before coming to the World of Firuman, Annie had become the first Assassin of the Norton Kingdom. She held great power, but ensnared by a demon, she grew more and more radical. In the end, she became a tool of darkness, killing King Leon and causing the ruin of the Norton Kingdom.

Link imagined that it had something to do with the inhumane torture she had received in the Black Water Prison.

But now, he had a chance to stop all that. To top it off, he would also receive Omni



Points if he succeeded. How could he refuse?

Under Ardivan's hopeful gaze, Link nodded. "Show the way, Assassin!"

# Chapter 12

## Rescuing the Legendary Assassin (2)

The MI3's outpost was located within the old city quarters, a considerable distance from the marketplace.

Ardivan led the way, followed closely by Link.

"Are your injuries alright?"

Link noticed the pallor in Ardivan's face. His footsteps were light, as if he were walking on clouds. His breath grew labored at the slightest increase in speed; his condition resembled that of a frail Magician.

"Heh heh. Don't worry, Your Honor. I can bear injuries twice as heavy as this," Ardivan laughed weakly, trying to put Link at ease.

As a professional Assassin, he had undergone harsh endurance training. The injuries he had were nothing. Still, he wasn't in a good condition due to his excessive blood loss.

Link scrutinized Ardivan closely. Ardivan's information appeared within his mind.

Ardivan (MI3)

Level-2 Elite Assassin

Battle Skills: Speed Burst, Dancing Daggers

Current condition: Weak and bleeding.

Weak and bleeding, his power was currently less than 50% of his maximum, and his stamina was less than 30%. His energy could run out, leaving him to die a sudden death at any second!

Ardivan's face was covered with sweat. Link was deeply moved by the human

Assassin's determination to battle despite his condition. Back on earth, the World of Firuman had just been a game to him. He had looked on coldly to the tragedies of the world—the lives there had been no more than mere NPCs to him.

But now, being a part of this world, Link realized that he was dealing with people—real people, actual flesh and blood just like the Ardivan before him. Ardivan could have just run away, but instead, he was risking everything he had to save Gladstone.

Thinking about it, Link decided to spend 10 Omni Points on an Elemental Healing Spell.

## Elemental Healing

### Level-1 Spell

Effect: Brings the elements within the target's body to equilibrium in order to relieve symptoms and replenish the body's shortages. The stronger the target's body, the stronger the effect of this healing spell.

Elemental Healing wasn't true healing magic, but it could relieve the symptoms of many diseases by bringing the target body's elements into equilibrium. It was quite suitable for Ardivan's condition—excessive blood loss and severe dehydration.

Ardivan was a powerful Assassin and the key to saving Annie Abel. He could not fall. Spending 10 Omni Points on him was worth it. In addition, Link would meet even more Assassins, and they too could be injured. This supplementary spell would help raise their overall combat abilities.

The familiar haze came over Link. A moment later, Link had learned the spell of Elemental Healing.

"Ardivan, I know a supplementary healing spell. Perhaps it will work for you," Link informed him to avoid any misunderstandings.

Ardivan was elated. "Your Honor. Please use it on me!"

The human Assassin understood his condition quite clearly. He was at the end of his rope, about to pass out and die at any moment. It didn't really matter to him if he died, but it would be terrible if it affected the overall situation.

Link lifted his wand and pointed it at Ardivan's chest. A clear, transparent beam of light appeared. The light, swarming with mysterious runes, enveloped Ardivan's torso.

After about one second, elemental properties gathered around them. The most abundant was water, then fire. The rest of the elements—wood, earth, and metal—were also present. They adjusted themselves according to the condition of Ardivan's body.

The whole process took about three seconds.

Afterwards, the light went out. The elements that had been lured there by Mana, blended into a milky-white fog. The cloud of smoke they formed didn't just consist of elements, but also contained nutrients processed by magic.

Under the guidance of Mana, the fog seeped into Ardivan's body silently. They replenished the elemental losses he had sustained due to the excessive blood loss.

In other words, the supplemental healing spell was just giving Ardivan all of his much-needed components. Ardivan absorbed all of it, saving much of his energy by skipping the physiological processes of digestion.

As an Elite Assassin, Ardivan had quite a strong body. He was weak not because of disease, but because his body had suffered substantial losses.

After the spell, Ardivan felt as if his pores had opened, allowing something to enter his body. Then, he found that he no longer felt thirsty. The rapid heartbeat brought on by his blood loss slowed. His quickened, shallow breaths grew long and deep, then resumed normalcy. He felt tremendous energy within himself.

The renewed strength was thanks to the nutrients, converted from the floating elements earlier. His body had now been replenished of its essential materials.

"Incredible! I feel so much better." Ardivan was thrilled. He moved his arm. Even his wounds weren't as painful as before.

Link smiled faintly. "Give it some time and you'll feel even better. Let's set out now. Move a bit more slowly. Let your body adapt to the changes."

Ardivan's body would convert the nutrients into the building blocks his body needed. It was an innate ability of the body to save itself. Ardivan's wounds would probably be

fine after a while as a result.

Coming from a character class which emphasized physical combat, Ardivan knew his body very well. He could feel the changes within it and knew that Link's words rang true. He slowed his pace and adjusted his breathing. They then continued on to the old city quarters at a less hurried pace.

Less than half an hour later, the two of them stood at the entrance to the old city quarters.

This part of the city had been the cradle of Gladstone. It held many ancient buildings, most of which were more than a century old. Many of Gladstone City's important governmental departments were also located here, including the MI3's outpost.

Because of that, there were just as many, if not more, Dark Elf Assassins within the area.

The large number of important governmental divisions in the area meant that few ordinary citizens lived here. Link and Ardivan would be easy to spot and thus, targeted by the Dark Elves.

Link now had 30 Omni Points. His Mana had recovered by more than 10 points, replenishing the Mana he had spent earlier. He now had a total of 30 Mana Points.

They would face frequent battles around the area. Fearing that he might not have enough Mana, Link spent another 5 Omni Points on Maximum Mana Points.

His Maximum Mana became 141 Points, with 80 Mana Points and counting.

Link did know the benefits of using Mana Speed Recovery, but the circumstances were too complicated. If he had used his Omni Points on Mana Speed Recovery from the beginning, he probably would have just died at the Magic Academy.

When this is settled, I will have to spend some Omni Points on Mana Speed Recovery. But my Maximum Mana needs to keep up too. Link thought to himself. A Level-1 Spell uses 6 Mana Points. A Level-2 Spell uses 30 Mana Points. A Level-3 Spell uses 120 Mana Points while a Level-4 Spell uses 300 Mana Points. If my Maximum Mana is too low, I won't be able to use high-level spells. That would be unfortunate.

He had to use his Omni Points on the best possible combination of Maximum Mana

Points and Mana Speed Recovery.

"Ardivan, how do you feel now?" Link asked. He had to ensure that the Assassin beside him was alright.

Ardivan swung his injured arm and smiled. "Better and better. My wounds don't hurt and all. They've even started to itch. I feel as if I hadn't even been hurt! Your magic is amazing."

Link took a close look at him. Ardivan's face was no longer pale, and his breathing was steady. Knowing that Ardivan wasn't pushing it, Link relaxed.

"Show the way. Go as fast as you can. I'll follow you. No need to worry about me, I can keep up," Link responded.

At this, Link spent another 10 Omni Points on the spell Cat's Agility.

Cat's Agility

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Energy will fill the target's body, allowing the target to be as agile as a cat. The spell lasts for 20 minutes.

There were many Dark Elf Assassins ahead, all swift, agile and on the alert. If Link still casted his spells without moving like he had in the Magic Academy, death would certainly welcome him soon.

But thanks to magic, Magicians could also be agile!

After purchasing the spell, Link spent 6 Mana Points to cast it on himself. Silver ropes of light surged out from his wand and wrapped around Link. The silver strands then sank into his body, leaving countless glistening magic runes on his skin.

Link examined the runes. He was embarrassed to admit that he didn't recognize a single one of them.

When I get out of here, I really will have to study magic properly. Otherwise, if I ever encounter a Master Magician, I'll be toyed with to my death. Link thought with unease.

Under the effects of the spell, Link felt much lighter. With just one stride, he shot out by 13 feet. He was as quick as a phantom, dispelling any worries Ardivan might have had.

"Follow me. Keep to the walls and the shadows." Ardivan crouched. Silently, he entered the old city quarters.

Link followed closely behind him. He also used 8 Mana Points on casting the spells of Lesser Invisibility and Silence over both himself and Ardivan. Instantly, they became as discreet as the shadows, disappearing into the night.

Ardivan was shocked. Only then did he notice the changes on himself. Cocking his head to the side, he realized that he couldn't pinpoint Link's exact location. And that was despite knowing Link was there. There was no way the Dark Elves would be able to sense them.

Magic really is incredible! he sang praises in his heart. He was far more confident now that they'd be able to save the Commander.

It was no wonder he was amazed at such little things like that. Magicians were proud beings, as most of them were scholars rather than Battle Mages. Few Magicians actually appeared on the battlefield, and even if they did, they were usually kept as secret aces. At his level, Ardivan was still unfit to receive any Magician's support.

The pair of them flitted through the shadows silently. In about five minutes, Ardivan suddenly stopped and rushed into the darkness of a particular street.

From the shadows, Link saw another Assassin from the MI3.

It was a female Assassin. She was petite and wore the standard dark-green armor of the MI3. Her chestnut hair was tied up in a ponytail.

She had been heavily wounded. There were gashes across her arms and legs, but at least she was still alive and conscious. Her wounds had received emergency treatment. Hearing some noise, she instinctively lifted a dagger.

But unfortunately, she was too weak. Her defenses would fend off a commoner, but in the eyes of a professional Assassin, one could see that it was full of flaws and exposed her weaknesses.

"Mary, it's me, Ardivan! I came back!" Ardivan cried out hastily.

The female Assassin called Mary cried out in surprise and joy. Immediately, she asked, "Has the news been sent?"

She had broken through the siege of Dark Elves with Ardivan, and held the same objective—find a way to let the Black Iron Garrison know of the situation in Gladstone. But she wasn't as strong as Ardivan, and she had been heavily wounded, stopping her from going any further.

"I sent it out. I sent out all the homing pigeons in the marketplace. All 23 of them! I labeled them all with the scent. They will definitely send the news out!" Ardivan cried.

Mary heaved a sigh of relief, but then she rushed to say, "Go to the headquarters to help out quickly. There are at least a hundred of the damned Dark Elves there. Commander Abel is in danger!"

Link arrived just then. Seeing him, Mary asked suspiciously, "Who is he?"

"This is Link Morani, a Magician. He's with us," Ardivan hurriedly explained.

Link looked at the petite female Assassin. Seeing her wounds, he said, "Don't move. I'll heal you."

He lifted his wand and pointed it at Mary.

Magic was mysterious to the average person. It was the first time Mary had heard of Magicians being able to heal. She shifted, visibly uncomfortable, but Ardivan comforted her.

"Don't worry, Mary. You'll recover very quickly."

Lights flashed, and five seconds later, the healing spell was complete. Mary moved around. She didn't understand. "There seems to have been some effect, but it's still not as effective compared to a Priest's Divine Spells. But at least I can stand now."

In the World of Firuman, all true healing magic was Divine. Divine Spells were powerful, able to heal wounds on the spot. They could even resurrect the dead. But that belonged to the realm of Gods. Mortal Magicians could never hope to achieve something like that.



Mary struggled to get to her feet, but Ardivan pushed her back down. "Mr. Link's healing spells are amazing, but you shouldn't move. Just rest here for about half an hour or so. You should be able to regain some strength by then. I'll go to the headquarters now. Come over quickly as soon as you've recovered."

Mary nodded, not entirely believing him.

Ardivan then stood up. With a face full of worry, he said to Link, "Your Honor, I need to go and give aid to the headquarters, but it's very dangerous."

He had thought of asking Link to help, but with an area having more than 100 Dark Elf Assassins, that was just too much. There were less than 30 of the MI3 still fighting at the outpost. The situation was quite desperate. Ardivan was prepared to fight to his death, but knowing that, he wouldn't just willingly send Link to his death too.

"Show the way!" Link said.

Ardivan opened his mouth to advise him against it.

"Every second that passes may cost us the life of one of your warriors!" Link looked straight at him. He had a rescue mission with a high reward, and he knew that Annie Abel couldn't be taken prisoner. The corruption of the future Legendary Assassin would be a catastrophe!

As long as he lived in this world, he wouldn't be able to just stay out of it.

Between facing a hundred or more Dark Elves now, and facing a formidable Legendary Assassin of the Dark in the future, Link wisely chose the former.

Ardivan's heart raced. He gave a strong nod, then turned and raced towards the headquarters, Link hot on his heels.

More than a hundred Assassins, that would be tricky. Link still had 15 Omni Points and 60 Mana Points. After thinking hard about it, he still decided to buy a ranged spell that took effect over a large field.

The exact spell he chose would depend on the situation there.

# Chapter 13

## Rescuing the Legendary Assassin (3)

The MI3 outpost was just over 300 feet away.

As a department in charge of information, the location of its outpost was quite unremarkable. A two-story building with iron grills, it was vaguely visible underneath several huge trees.

The building had been built of stone and so it was extremely sturdy. Naturally, it would have been expensive to build.

On its left was a shop that sold armor, while a tailor's shop stood on its right. The MI3 outpost sat before a wide square with a fountain in its center, lined with smooth pebbles. A small hotel stood opposite, flanked by residential units.

All the other buildings had been made of wood.

The buildings weren't labeled; neither were there guards by the door. If it hadn't been for Ardivan, Link would have never found his way here, even with his prior knowledge of the game.

A game was just a game after all. Compared to reality, many details were omitted. To avoid ridiculous costs, it was impossible for the game to duplicate Gladstone City exactly. The game had just given an outline of it.

Ardivan and Link hid in an alley towards the left of the fountain square. Link leaned against the wall as Ardivan stuck his head out to take a look at their surroundings every now and then.

After a while, he shrunk back into the shadows. Earnestly, he turned to Link. "The battle in the building is still going on. But the important streets are all guarded by Dark Elf Assassins. I found at least 20 hidden Dark Elves. They've taken over the vantage points around the fountain square and oil lamps. There's no way for us to sneak in.

They had lit all the oil lamps. The fountain square was as bright as day, leaving not a

shadow unseen. It had rendered Link's spell of Lesser Invincibility ineffective.

Should they break through by force?

They would probably die as porcupines, pierced by the Assassins' arrows, within ten steps of charging out. That would be nothing other than suicide.

Link frowned and thought deeply. Within a few seconds, he came up with a plan. "Why don't the Dark Elves just attack with fire? Do they want to capture Commander Abel alive?" Link asked.

Although the three-story building was made of stone, it had still used a large amount of wood in its construction. Attacking with fire would have been enough to force the people inside to flee.

Ardivan paused. His expression grew heavy. "It's very likely."

Link said, "Even though they have no good intentions, it's far more difficult for them to capture her alive. They'll take more time to do it too. That's our chance. Can you pinpoint the Dark Elves hidden around the fountain square?"

"I can. I am the best in concealment at this outpost. Even these Dark Elves are no match for me. Only one or two might manage to escape me." There was a hint of pride in Ardivan's voice.

But Link shook his head. "You can't miss a single one. Can you promise that?"

Ardivan looked dismayed. Doing it alone would be too difficult for him.

"Then we'll have to take advantage of some chaos if we are to meet up with Commander Abel safely." Link wasn't really surprised. People had their limits after all.

"What should we do?"

"Attack with fire," Link replied.

"Alright. I'll be relying on you....but wait, we'll be seen once we light anything." Ardivan suddenly realized that he had forgotten an important fact—Link was a Magician! Link had many more ways of conjuring fire than he did.

Link quietly stuck his head out from behind the wall and threw a quick glance at the fountain square. Then, he blended back into the shadows.

With that one glance, he had memorized the positions of all the oil lamps around the square. The image was as clear as day to him.

The Link before couldn't have done that. But his soul had been fortified by the God of Light. Now, accurately recording every detail like a camera seemed as easy and natural to him as drinking water.

Against the corner, Link lifted his wand. Something shifted above its tip. Mana stretched out quietly and discreetly. With the Magician's Hand, his Mana crept out slowly towards an oil lamp 50 feet away.

Very soon, Link felt his Magician's Hand touch the oil lamp. But he didn't make a move; he was waiting.

After about 30 seconds, strong gusts of wind blew, causing the oil lamps to swing and creak with noise.

Now!

Link pulled at the oil lamp in time with the wind. It fell from the lamp post, Link controlling its descent the entire way. The lamp, which should have smashed onto the floor, instead fell onto some firewood three feet away.

The oil spread out onto the firewood, and with a roar, it burst into flames.

Beside the firewood was a wooden house. Within moments, that too caught fire. The wind blew towards the outpost of the MI3. Fanned by the wind, the flames burned stronger than ever, quickly spreading to the other wooden buildings around the square.

Taking the chance, Link quickly stuck his head out from his hiding place again. He saw several figures jump down from the window of one of the wooden houses. They landed with a roll, deflecting the momentum of jumping from such a height—a clear display of their agility.

These were, of course, Dark Elf Assassins who had been in hiding. They had been forced out by the fire.

Five minutes later, the flames grew stronger. One by one, the Dark Elves were forced out of their hiding places. The fountain square was in chaos.

That was good enough. Link said to Ardivan, "Come with me. Let's rush in."

"No, you don't know the way—!" Link rushed out before Ardivan could finish. Under the effect of the Cat's Agility, he was lightning fast.

Speechless, Ardivan had no choice but to follow.

But before long he found that Link seemed to know the square's layout like the back of his hand. Ardivan was astounded. From one hiding place to another, even while using the flames to shade themselves from sight, Link seemed as familiar with the place as if it were his backyard.

Already halfway through, the Dark Elf Assassins still hadn't noticed them!

He was unable to explain it, but the worry he'd held disappeared. More at ease, he focused on following Link.

They reached the iron gate in front of the outpost very quickly. The fire hadn't spread there yet, nor was there a place to hide. The Dark Elves had finally noticed them.

They were out of the range of the hidden Dark Elf Archers, so the elves just charged at them.

Link didn't even stop. He continued running towards the iron gate, yelling at Ardivan, "They're still more than 100 feet away from us! Ignore them, just keep going!"

With his agile movements from the Cat's Agility spell, he darted forward. Right before the iron gate Link leaped up more than ten feet into the air. Reaching out, he grabbed a drooping branch from one of the ancient trees within the courtyard and swung himself into the compound.

Ardivan, seeing that, stopped trying to be stealthy and quickly flipped over the gate.

There were also Dark Elf Assassins within the courtyard. Three of them came at Link before he even landed. Link, still in mid-air, prepared to cast Fireballs at them.

But just then, a figure flashed behind the window on the second floor of the stone

building. With a single, loud twang, three arrows flew out of the window, each one shooting out towards the Dark Elf Assassins, forcing them to retreat.

It was an ally!

Thanks to that, Link and Ardivan managed to land safely.

Ardivan covered Link as they charged forward. Link leapt up to the window where he had seen the mysterious figure. With the effects of Cat's Agility still in play, he managed to jump to a height of more than ten feet. Link grabbed onto the window-sill and flipped through the opening.

An Assassin of the MI3 had appeared in this window earlier. That meant that it was safe. That was why Link had chosen to enter the building from here.

Ardivan didn't have the explosive power that Link had. Though unable to jump to the same height, climbing up to the second floor was easy for a Level-2 Elite Assassin like him. Building on the momentum from his charge, Ardivan leaped up and pushed off the crevices in the walls, ultimately managing to enter the window.

As Ardivan stood, he was shocked by what he saw.

Hastily, he shouted, "Commander, this is Magician Link Morani. He's here to help!"

Annie Abel had her dagger held to Link's chest, mistaking him for an enemy. Link had anticipated this, and so he froze with his hands held high above his head.

Of course, he didn't really think that Annie would harm him. During this moment he took a good look at the future Legendary Assassin before him.

She was very young, only about twenty-three or twenty-four-years-old. She was about 5'5" in height. The dark green, figure-hugging armor she wore outlined her slender figure. Though she was masked, the contours of her face were perfect. The exposed skin was a flawless, milky-white. Her dark-blue eyes were framed by thin eyebrows that fanned up towards the end, making her look somewhat handsome instead of just pretty. She sported a head of bright golden hair, cut short in a blunt and bold style.

Compared to the tortured, scar-faced Legendary Assassin he had seen in the game, Annie Abel was now a flower in full bloom.

Link looked around the room. There were only four MI3 Assassins left. Each of them had been wounded to varying degrees. The most seriously injured Assassin couldn't even get up. The room was filled with the thick scent of blood.

Hearing Ardivan's words, Annie knew that she had been mistaken. Though she lowered her dagger, she still remained cautious. She looked towards her subordinate. Her motive was clear. "Has the news been sent out?"

"Twenty-three homing pigeons, all labeled with scent. They won't be attacked by the Blood-eyed Owls and will probably reach the Black Iron Garrison in an hour's time!" Ardivan reported, straightening his back.

"Very good!" The lines of Annie's face softened. Turning towards Link, she said, "Introduce this Magician."

Ardivan kept his reply short and sweet. "Commander, he's from the Magic Academy. It was he who destroyed the Portal Tower."

At that, all the Assassins in the room turned to look at him, their gazes full of respect.

The Portal Tower had been crucial to this battle. Only because the Portal Tower had been destroyed, did the Norton Kingdom stand a chance at saving Gladstone.

If Gladstone managed to overcome this disaster, Link would have contributed the most. What he did was what allowed everything else to be possible!

Annie relaxed completely. "I am very sorry for my rudeness earlier, Mr. Link."

Link wouldn't take such a small thing to heart. The situation around was very dire. He cut straight to the point. "Commander Abel, what is your plan?"

# Chapter 14

## Preparing to Breakout

Annie and the other Assassins looked dumbfounded at Link's question about their plans.

They had no plans. The outpost only had five Assassins left. With so many Dark Elf Assassins surrounding them, and having lost the ground floor, the room on the second floor was the only other place they could go to.

Honestly, they were just waiting for their deaths.

They couldn't even hope for reinforcements. As the foremost intelligence agency in the Norton Kingdom, no one knew the situation in and around Gladstone better than they did.

The Dark Elves had planned their ambush for a very long time. From what they knew, Gladstone's defenses had all collapsed.

The powers that were within the city were doing their best just to save themselves. Frankly, even that would be a blessing. There was no way they'd spare the time to save others.

The room was silent for some time. Then, Annie, blushing slightly, shook her head. "Mr. Link. We want to break out of here. But as you know, there are too many enemies out there."

They hadn't thought of another plan other than to fight to their deaths.

But Link had come here just to save them. There were many Dark Elf Assassins out there, but he was confident that he could help the human Assassins out with his magic.

He pushed on, "If we managed to escape, what would you do next?"

Annie paused, pondering the question. "If we manage to get out of here, then I'd go to the city guard's barracks. There are more than 1,500 soldiers stationed there. If we



have the city guard on our side, then we'll be able to suppress the Dark Elf Army!"

The commander of the city guard was called Carlos. He was a powerful Level-4 Warrior. However, he had passed away after a brief battle with an illness last night. Considering tonight's events, it was more than likely that he'd been poisoned by the Dark Elves. The city guard, merely a disordered pack of armed men without their leader, were completely incapable of maintaining the law and order of the city. Annie believed that as the daughter of the Iron Duke, so long as she managed to reach the barracks, she would be able to seize control of the city guard!

Link nodded. Instantly, new notifications appeared.

Part One of Rescuing the Legendary Assassin: Find the Legendary Assassin—completed.

Game Player receives 10 Omni Points

Begin Part Two of Mission: Breakthrough!

Mission Details: Break through the siege of Dark Elf Assassins!

The 10 Omni Points had come at just the right time. Link, who had been left with 15 Omni Points, now had 25 Omni Points. He now had more resources to fall back on.

He also had 65 Mana Points. Of the Assassins around him, two were heavily injured while another two had suffered only minor wounds. He walked over to the heavily wounded Assassins. "Don't move. I'll heal you."

Annie was apprehensive. She had never heard of Magicians performing healing magic before. At a glance from her, Ardivan explained, "Mr. Link's healing magic is very effective."

Annie relaxed.

Link then cast the spells. There were two flashes of light as he cast Elemental Healing on each of the heavily wounded Assassins. For that, he used 12 Mana Points.

Upon the completion of the spell, the Assassins' breathing slowed and steadied as some color returned to their ashen faces. The changes she saw made Annie sigh in relief.

"They should be able to move in half an hour's time," Link said quietly. Just then, the hairs on the back of his neck stood up. Something wasn't right! Right away, he lifted his wand and pointed it squarely at the door.

"Who is it!"

A shadowy figure appeared on the wooden stairs right outside the door. At the sight of Link's wand, it flitted to the side, blending into the darkness.

"Who's there?" Link was somewhat shaken up. Such quick movements most likely meant that the Dark Elf Assassin was powerful. He might have even mastered Battle Aura.

For a Magician, an Assassin who has mastered Battle Aura was a huge threat, ten times more so than a Warrior of the same skill level. This was because they were too fast, too agile for Magicians to predict what they would do next. Magicians needed to predict their opponents' movements because spellcasting took time. Even Link was unable to cast a spell instantaneously. A Level-0 Spell needed 0.1 seconds, a Level-1 Spell needed 0.3 seconds, and a Level-2 Spell needed a full second. If the Magician was unable to predict his opponents' movements accurately, he would have to rely on sheer luck.

But you lived only once. How could one rely on just luck?

Annie turned and shielded Link from what lay beyond the door. Her expression was serious. "It's the Dark Elf Assassin Leader. He's Level-3!"

A Level-3 fighter who had already mastered Battle Aura. He was formidable indeed.

Because Annie stood right in front of him, Link easily saw her information.

Annie Abel

Level-3 Elite Assassin

Battle Arts: The Shadow Form

Battle Skills: Speed Burst, Dagger Storm, Shadow Dance, Strangle.

After reviewing her information, Link felt slightly more at peace. As a Legendary

Assassin to be, Annie Abel was probably just as strong, if not stronger than the Dark Elf Assassin Leader. Otherwise, the MI3 wouldn't have been able to keep the large number of Dark Elf Assassins at bay.

If Link, with his current strength, had to face the Dark Elf Assassin Leader alone, he would most likely be killed within a single second.

Assassins were also known as Magician slayers. Worse, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader was already 2 skill levels higher than Link. Alone, Link didn't stand a chance. But now, he had teammates. That made all the difference.

One century ago, a Magician of the Norton Kingdom once said, "If you give Magicians enough time to cast their spells, they can create wonders."

With teammates, Link would surely have enough time to cast his spells. At that thought, he felt his spirits lift.

More confident, he nodded. "I'll be careful."

He looked at the Assassins he had healed. Their bodies were much stronger than he had expected. Though they still looked weak, they were much better than before and had even managed to sit up on their own. Their conditions were improving rapidly.

"We'll break through in another 20 minutes," Link said quietly. The two Assassins should be able to fight by then. He would then take the time to replenish some Mana.

"What should we do?" Annie couldn't think of a way to break through the hordes of Dark Elf Assassins surrounding them. Not even with a Magician added into the equation.

But Link already had a plan in mind, he just didn't say it out loud to avoid being overheard by the enemy. Instead, he looked around for a different means to communicate. Seeing some graphite sticks on the table, he picked one up and began writing on the stone floor. "First, we kill the Dark Elf Assassin Leader!"

Annie disagreed. Taking the graphite stick from him, she quickly wrote, "Even if we manage to kill him, we'll still be surrounded. The fountain square is too wide and they've nearly put out the flames. We won't be able to avoid the attacks from their archers."

Link frowned. "Doesn't this building have a secret passage?" he wrote back.

How could information agencies like the MI3 have just a single exit? It should have multiple.

Annie smiled bitterly and went on writing. "The escape passage was found out. They bribed one of our external Assassins. The passage collapsed—they bombed it."

That was unexpected, but it made sense. Otherwise, Annie and her team wouldn't have been stuck on the second floor like that. Link thought it over and came up with a different plan. "My magic can handle their arrows, so we'll only need to deal with their close range attacks. I should also be able to stop them from getting close to us easily. Do you think you'll be able to fend them off like that?" He scribbled hastily.

His initial plan had been to use a Level-1 Lesser Whirlwind Spell to defend against the arrows. But now that he had 25 Omni Points, he planned to purchase a Level-2 Spell.

Level-2 Spells were far stronger than Level-1 Spells. They would have higher chances of escaping successfully if Link used Level-2 Spells.

Annie's eyes lit up. "We'll definitely be able to break out of here!" she wrote back.

She had complete confidence in her own skills. All she had been worried about were the Dark Elves' arrows.

Link nodded. "That's good. Now, let's think of a plan to get rid of the Dark Elf Assassin Leader."

"What should we do?" asked Annie. Without her realizing, the Magician who had appeared out of nowhere had become the cornerstone of their little makeshift team.

Link smiled as he wrote back a response. "Can you pinpoint the Dark Elf Assassin Leader's exact location?"

"Yes! I can feel him!" Annie nodded earnestly. Powerful Assassins had an awareness of each other. It was rather easy for Annie to locate him because she was, though just by a hair, stronger than he. Further, his appearance earlier had narrowed down his possible whereabouts.

Link was thrilled. "Draw out the layout of the first floor and tell me where he is!"

That was easy. Sketching was a basic but important requirement of being an intelligence agent. With just a few strokes, Annie produced the first floor's layout. She then went on to produce a 3D plan of the first floor from a 45-degree angle, showing the structure of the floor quite clearly.

Link examined it for a few seconds before closing his eyes to recreate it in his mind. "And where is he now?" he scribbled.

Annie cocked her head and listened closely. After about three seconds, she tapped the 3D plan lightly before writing, "Not far. He's on the stairway landing. The location I give you won't be further off than two feet!"

Link's skill with mental images proved its usefulness as he imagined the Dark Elf Assassin Leader's location. Nevertheless, he was quite aware that he wouldn't be able to take out the Dark Elf Leader on his own. Level-0 Spells wouldn't stand a chance against an agile Level-3 Assassin, and Level-1 Spells used too much Mana. He needed to save as much Mana as possible for later, so that wouldn't do. He needed someone to cooperate with him!

"If I use magic to hinder his movements, what are your chances of killing him?"

Annie looked up towards the ceiling, pondering. After a couple seconds she replied, "If none of the other elves interfere, I will kill him!"

Link nodded. "Don't worry. They won't."

There was just one stair landing where the stairs took a turn. It was a small, tight space. His Fireballs would be enough to keep the other Dark Elf Assassins at bay.

"Then, we'll begin once your injured Assassins are able to move properly!" Link scribbled, finalizing it.

By this time, the light from outside the window had dimmed as the Dark Elves had put out most of the flames. The chaos earlier was also in the midst of settling.

As the time passed, the Dark Elves grew more restless, attacking them from time to time. Their patience was obviously wearing thin.

The injured Assassins recovered much faster than Link had expected. They were able to stand and walk after just another ten minutes. Though still weak, they had regained

some combat capabilities.

"Commander, we're still recovering but we're good enough to set out," one of them said.

Annie looked at Link, who had his eyes closed, conserving his energy. Though his Mana had only recovered by 3 Points throughout this time, he now had 58 Mana Points. It was enough.

Even with his eyes closed, he could feel Annie's gaze on him. The strength of his soul, fortified by The God of Light, made Link's senses exceptionally sensitive. Opening his eyes, he nodded.

Let the escape begin!

# Chapter 15

## Summoning the Hailstorm

Gladstone City, the Old City Quarters, the MI3 outpost.

The Dark Elf Assassins' patience had worn out. Their leader hid silently on the landing of the stairs leading up to the second floor, waiting for his subordinates to fall into place.

They should have launched their main attack half an hour ago, but unexpectedly, two allies of their opponents had appeared, setting fire to the buildings around them. It had forced them to spend manpower on putting out the rapidly spreading flames around the fountain square, throwing their plans into disarray.

But now that the fire had been put out, it was finally time to put an end to the confrontation.

Ting! Ting! Ting!

The Dark Elf Assassin Leader heard the distinct clash of weapons from somewhere outside the stone building. It was the signal they'd agreed upon, signaling that the Dark Elves there were already in place.

Three more positions left. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader thought to himself. His plan was simple. When all his subordinates were in place, blocking their opponents' escape routes, they would shoot fire arrows through the windows and into the room where their opponents hid. Then, three Dark Elf Assassins would break down the eastern wall of the room, letting more of the elves into the midst of the chaos. While the powerful human female Assassin was engaged, he would barge in through the door, capturing her alive quickly!

Annie Abel. I wonder what that sly old duke's expression will be when he finds out that his only daughter has been captured. Hahaha. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader sneered coldly to himself.

Capturing Annie Abel was an important objective in this ambush of Gladstone.

Out of the blue, three white, glowing orbs shot out of the room. Gliding in a smooth arc, they shot out towards the Dark Elf Assassin Leader's head.

His pupils constricted as he took in the attack.

Fireballs! It's that Magician!

Fireballs were just Level-0 Spells. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader was just slightly taken aback. Composing himself, Battle Aura enveloped him in a faint gray glow. Then, he moved.

His speed was leaps and bounds beyond the average person's limits. His torso twisted abruptly, the dagger in his left hand shooting out with deadly accuracy. He was as quick as a flash of lightning, storming towards one of the fireballs.

With a light poof, he hit the fireball, which had been flying in an unpredictable path! It exploded into a harmless cloud of sparks.

One down. Two more to go.

This time, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader didn't use his dagger. He lifted a foot, the gray glow at its tip growing brighter, to kick the second ball of flame.

It extinguished with another poof!

One last fireball remained. The Assassin swung his arm up to cover his face, protecting his eyes.

Bang! It smashed into his arm, exploding into a ball of flame, yet it barely managed to shake his arm.

What a joke, using Level-0 Spells against me, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader thought contemptuously.

Within a split second, his contempt turned to horror.

When he removed his arm, he saw that a figure, covered by a hazy glow had charged forward within six feet of him. The Dark Elf Assassin Leader recognized it to be a special kind of Battle Aura.



The figure was much more petite than he was—only about 5'5" in height, but they were fast. It took only a split second to travel the distance between them, bringing two ice-cold gusts of wind as they swung their daggers at him.

Shit! It's Annie! This is the Battle Skill, Dagger Storm! The Dark Elf Assassin Leader's heart shook.

Dagger Storm was a classical Assassin Battle Skill. Once activated, it would stab the target's vitals several times within a split second. Augmented by Battle Aura, the speed was even faster, such as now. The daggers in Annie's hands blurred with the sheer speed in which they moved.

But the Assassin Leader wasn't a normal person either, after all. With his life in danger, he gave it his all and countered with the same Battle Skill, Dagger Storm.

The rapid clashes of their weapons rang out in the dark, bringing up a flurry of sparks that lit up the narrow stairway landing from time to time.

Dagger Storm against Dagger Storm.

Annie stabbed her dagger eight times almost simultaneously, each time clashing with the Assassin Leader's own dagger. Her Battle Skill was countered perfectly.

The Dark Elf Assassins on the first floor reacted. The two closest to the fight rushed to the aid of their leader.

But their leader wasn't the only one who had help.

Fwoosh! Fwoosh! Two more fireballs flew out of the room on the second floor. Making sharp turns at the stairway landing, they each shot towards a Dark Elf Assassin.

Recognizing the location of the source of a sound was an essential skill for Battle Mages. If a Magician's attacks were only limited to his field of vision, it would really be a waste of magic.

With the fireballs flying right in their faces, the two Dark Elf Assassins had no choice but to stop and defend themselves.

Link's spell had bought Annie more time.

The Dark Elf Assassin Leader had managed to counter her Dagger Storm, though largely due to luck. And he had used most of his strength on the same Battle Skill. Annie could feel that his reactions were slower, though just by a hair. She, on the other hand, felt perfectly fine and in fact, was still at her peak.

She didn't use any Battle Skills after the first Dagger Storm. Quick as lightning, she swung a dagger towards her opponent's neck, while her other dagger stabbed towards his chest.

The Dark Elf Assassin Leader had countered her Battle Skill with difficulty. His arms were numb and he was unable to react in time.

Sensing the impending danger of the daggers before him, he was filled with dread. It's over! he thought to himself.

Ting! Pshhh. He managed to block the stab towards his heart, but despite extending his neck as far back as he could, he was unable to duck the attack to his throat since Annie had adjusted her blade accordingly.

The cold dagger sliced through his throat, dissecting his trachea. Destructive Battle Aura surged around his wound, making a mess of the surrounding tissue.

Blood spurted out, but Annie had already backed off. Not a drop landed on her. By the time she had retreated to the second floor, the Dark Elf Assassin Leader, clutching his throat, had fallen to his knees with a thud. Then, his upper body landed heavily on the ground.

He was dead.

There was no need for Annie to check the results. The sensation of her dagger slicing through his flesh had told her all she needed to know. Back in the room, she said quietly, "It is done!"

Immediately, Link ordered, "Let's go. Now!"

The moment the Dark Elf Assassin Leader died would be the moment of chaos for the Dark Elf Assassins and also the best time for Link and the other MI3 agents to break through.

As he charged, Link shouted in his mind,

Purchase Spell: Lesser Hailstorm!

Lesser Hailstorm

Level-2 Spell

Mana Cost: 30 Points

Effect: Summon an icy draft that spins around the spellcaster like a whirlwind. The radius is more than ten feet. Any opponents that go within ten feet of the spellcaster will be attacked by drafts and ice shards. The spell lasts for 5 minutes or until the spellcaster cancels it.

If Level-0 Spells were just large firecrackers and Level-1 Spells were able to crush normal defenses; Level-3 Spells, which cost as much as 30 Mana Points to cast, were enough to make the average person cower in fear.

Link's Lesser Hailstorm and Master Holmes' monstrous Earth Hound were both formidable forces that never appeared in normal lives.

Link still had 48 Mana Points left after using five Fireballs and 10 Mana Points during Annie's battle. It was enough for him to use the Lesser Hailstorm once.

When he had successfully purchased the spell, Annie had already reached the stairway landing where she came face to face with the two Dark Elf Assassins from earlier.

The two elves were both Level-2 Elites. They were powerful, but to Annie, they were as weak as newborn kittens.

Annie moved in a flash, the daggers in her hand flitted like butterflies, leaving one Assassin clutching his chest and the other grabbing at his throat as he fell to the ground.

The rest of the MI3 Assassins rushed to the first floor where they first entered the hall.

The six Dark Elf Assassins positioned there attacked them from all directions.

Annie had no problems dealing with two of them—but six, she would be putting her life on the line if she tried to fend off six of them. No matter how strong she was, it would be difficult to guard against so many.

But she wasn't alone.

Her five Assassins, including Ardivan, formed a circle around Link, protecting him against the Dark Elf Assassins that came at them.

It was now six against six. Though two of their own Assassins were still very weak, they had Annie, a Level-3 Assassin with Battle Aura, and Link, who used Fireballs to stall them.

Annie killed three Dark Elf Assassins single-handedly. Link cast two Fireballs to save his teammates when they were in danger.

With no one in the hall left to stop them, they rushed towards the door. Outside, there would be more than 90 Dark Elf Assassins. Their hidden guards would be everywhere. Silent arrows could come at them from any dark corner.

They would be in true danger.

All of them turned to look at Link. He took a deep breath and calmly told them, "Gather around me. Don't go further than six feet from me. I'm going to cast a spell!"

If they stood too far away from him, they would get attacked by the Lesser Hailstorm.

The Assassins nodded. They were all well-trained fighters. The six of them formed a circle around Link, leaving less than two feet of space in between each other. Luckily, the circle was less than six feet in diameter.

Link raised his wand. The Mana within him surged into the wand in the form of a cold, clear glow from his hand. The new moon that embellished the tip of the wand glowed a piercing, icy-white.

The white light lit up the night. As it did, cold winds seemed to appear out of thin air.

Fwoosh! Violent winds, snowflakes, and ice-shards rapidly grew to form a whirlwind more than 15 feet wide.

Within it, sharp shards of ice danced around like daggers, ruthlessly cutting anything that entered their paths. As the whirlwind blew through the room, ice shards broke with crashing sounds as they smashed into the objects in the room.

In that moment, Link, holding his wand up high, looked just like the God of Wind.

Even the Assassins of the MI3, who had seen many things in their lives, were stunned. They stood still, full of awe.

"What are you waiting for!? Charge!!" Link cried out harshly. He could only hold the spell for five minutes. Every second was precious.

The Assassins were brought back to their senses. Gathering tightly around Link, they charged out of the MI3 outpost and out into the open fountain square.

# Chapter 16

## Let's Do It!

The Dark Elf Assassins were shocked at the sight of the icy storm appearing at the door of the MI3 outpost.

"What the hell is that?"

"It's magic!"

"Where is the leader? Where is he!?"

The Dark Elf Assassins couldn't see their leader from where they stood. They couldn't see anything through the spinning shards of ice either; there was no way their leader was in there.

Their leader had probably died.

The obvious conclusion threw the Dark Elf Assassins into a panicked chaos. Some hesitated, others attacked, and some yelled in confusion. It was a mess.

Link brought the MI3 Assassins out of the metal gate and into the fountain square.

Fwoosh! Arrows shot towards them.

"Shoot, shoot! They're inside! Shoot them to death!" a Dark Elf cried.

More arrows came at them, but to no avail. The hailstorm not only blew away their arrows, but also blocked the elves from even seeing their targets. The human Assassins within it were quite safe. All they needed to do was to stay on the alert and cast away any stray arrows that might have made their way in.

The hailstorm continued moving forward. In that moment the Dark Elf Assassins knew that their arrows had been utterly useless.

"Charge! Kill them!"

"The hailstorm is too dangerous. It's full of ice shards. Charge into that?"

"Are you scared? You coward!"

All sorts of arguments broke forth. Without a leader to guide them, the large crowd of Dark Elf Assassins was just like headless geese.

But there were still hot-blooded, reckless fellows among them.

More than ten Dark Elf Assassins charged at the icy whirlwind, masked and leaning forward as they ran. They went in head-on.

But they regretted it the moment they stepped foot into the hailstorm.

The icy winds were sharp, and there were countless dagger-like shards within them. The attacks that rained on them couldn't be fended off with just techniques alone.

The Lesser Hailstorm spanned slightly more than 15 feet with a concentrated radius of less than ten feet. The true zone where it took effect was just a little more than three feet wide. It was in this zone where one would be torn to shreds.

Once they charged in, the Dark Elf Assassins were attacked from all directions.

Some immediately sustained critical injuries and fell to the ground. Others were luckier to have made their way into the center, but even so, they shivered with cold, and they were bruised all over. What waited for them was no welcome ceremony, but the blades of the human Assassins!

The first wave of Assassins was crushed within five seconds.

When the hailstorm moved away, their mutilated corpses were left on the ground, leaving the others speechless.

The remaining Dark Elf Assassins became silent. Their bravery fled. No one else dared to charge at it.

After that, a small group of the Dark Elf Assassins followed the hailstorm from afar, another group of them shot arrows towards it every now and then, while yet another group just stood around, not knowing what to do.

"The leader's over here. He's dead!" a Dark Elf cried out from the first floor of the MI3 outpost.

Link successfully brought Annie and the other human Assassins out of the fountain square. Three minutes later, they found themselves in a small alley.

It was narrow, making it difficult for arrows to ambush them and significantly reducing the amount of danger they faced.

"Continue. Go to the hotel, it has a secret passage!" Annie said suddenly. The secret passage there was privy to only core members. It probably hadn't been found since it was in a such an inconspicuous location. Link immediately turned towards the hotel.

There were Dark Elf Assassins at the bar inside, but after witnessing the damage the hailstorm could do, they bolted when it started moving towards them.

The hotel was small and cramped. Seeing no trace of the Dark Elf Assassins, Link canceled the spell.

Annie waved a hand. "Follow me."

She led the way to the kitchen in the back of the hotel. Several corpses laid on the kitchen floor—the chef and some workers. The entrance to the hotel's cellar stood in a corner of the kitchen.

Annie took a deep breath, opened the cellar door, dragged the chef's corpse over and threw it in. The corpse landed with a thump. It looked as if there weren't any Dark Elf Assassins in there.

"Safe!" Annie gestured before entering the cellar. Link followed closely behind her, and the other human Assassins walked behind him.

Annie explained the situation to Link as they walked deeper into the cellar. "The passage is in the deepest part of the cellar. It's a real maze, with only one correct path which leads to a house about 650 feet away. It should be far enough for us to shake the Dark Elf Assassins off our trail!"

Link nodded. They would probably be safe by that point.

Actually, the game server had already given him a new notification about that.



Rescuing the Legendary Assassin completed.

Game player receives 15 Omni Points.

The next part of the mission has not been activated.

With the 15 Omni Points, Link's total Omni Points had gone back to twenty. This gave him much more leeway.

They had reached the deepest part of the cellar. Annie fumbled around the wall behind a huge wine casket. Finally, she opened a very cleverly hidden secret door. Climbing into it, she told Link, "Mr. Link, you've done us all a great favor. We'll take it from here and make sure you reach your destination safely."

Ardivan piped up, "You saved my life. I will be your strongest shield!"

The other human Assassins nodded in agreement.

From this short journey, they had realized the importance of having a Magician—with magic, they had broken through a siege of Dark Elf Assassins more than ten times their number!

It was nothing short of a miracle. No one would believe it even if they told them.

As long as they had Link, they would be able to achieve so many things that had originally seemed impossible. How could they put such a precious, important member of their team in danger?

Link relaxed a little, knowing that he could rest.

He had been tensed this entire time. Using magic in combat was also especially taxing on the mind. Not a single thing could go wrong. He really was tired.

Luckily, their passage through the tunnel was uneventful. Five minutes later, they walked out of the passage and into a normal-looking house.

A young couple, who were external members of the MI3, greeted them. They didn't seem surprised to see Annie and her team. Noticing that all of them were hurt, the husband brought out some clean bandages and medicine while his wife cleaned and wrapped the Assassins' wounds. She seemed quite good at it and had probably

received professional training.

It was a pity that they didn't have any Magic Potions. Otherwise, Link might have been able to replenish his Mana more quickly.

When she opened Ardivan's bandages, which had been wrapped hastily, the woman cried out, "The wound has healed so quickly!"

At this, Ardivan gave Link a grateful nod.

Annie was surprised. She hadn't thought that Link's healing magic would be so effective. She turned to look at him.

Link was slumped against the wall. His eyes were heavy and his arms were crossed before his chest. His wand had been stuck in his belt rather simply. Weariness was etched all over his young face.

Annie knew that spellcasting was a very taxing thing to do. This was why Magicians placed a lot of emphasis on rest—and it was already close to one o'clock in the morning. Within just one night, the young Magician had destroyed the Portal Tower, escaped the Dark Elf Assassins within the Magic Academy, and then had come to their aid, all with little to no rest.

He must be exhausted.

For some reason, Annie's heart softened at the sight of him like that. She wanted to hug him close and let him rest.

This was a completely foreign sensation to her. Blinking rapidly to bring her back to reality, Annie herself was shocked at the thought. What is wrong with me? Why would I think something like that?

Touching her face discreetly, she could feel the heat on her cheeks.

Ardivan looked at her curiously. "Commander, are you hurt? Why is your face so red?"

"I'm fine." Annie panicked a little, as if her thoughts had been found out. She pulled a straight face. "We don't have much time. Rest properly!"

"Yes." Ardivan didn't dare to disobey her instructions.

The small team rested for a full ten minutes in the house. Their wounds were taken care of and with enough healing tonics, they were energetic and almost as good as new.

"Commander, should we get going?" Ardivan asked softly. According to their plan, their next destination would be the city guards' barracks.

Annie looked at Link, hesitating. She wanted to let him rest a little more.

But Link had already opened his eyes. "Let's go!" he said.

"But you..." Annie said in spite of herself, worry brimming her eyes.

"I'm perfectly fine. My Mana has recovered somewhat since I've rested. It'll be enough to handle some things. We should go!" Link urged.

He only had 15 Mana Points, but he had 20 Omni Points in total. He'd be able to handle anything, even if that Holmes came after him!

As he stood up, a new notification flashed.

Mission triggered: Escort!

Mission Details: Escort the Human Assassin Leader, Annie Abel, to the city guards' Camp of Gladstone City.

Mission Reward: 30 Omni Points.

30 Omni Points; that was a very high mission reward.

As Link completed these missions, the objective of the game server became clear. It didn't want Link to just escape from Gladstone City like in the game, it wanted him to stop the massacre and save the city!

Should he accept it? Link hesitated. If he did, he would be putting his life on the line.

His mind flashed back to the images of the young and beautiful magic teacher Vera struggling to live, Ardivan, covered in blood, fighting the Dark Elf Assassins, Mary, heavily wounded and hiding in the alley, first asking whether the news had been sent out...

The Assassins of the MI3 were doing their best to save Gladstone City, not caring for their own safety. Link suddenly felt that fighting for this didn't seem all that bad.

This time, I'll give it my all! He told himself softly.

To get stronger, and to save the city, those were his goals.

Straightening up, he clutched the New Moon Wand tightly. The past series of battles had affirmed his conviction.

# Chapter 17

## He Must Be Stopped!

Gladstone City, the Flower District.

A monstrous black hound sniffed the ground as it ran, followed by the Dark Elf Magician, Holmes, and some Dark Elf Assassins.

Tracking was a meticulous art—it couldn't be rushed. Only after one full hour, did the Dark Elves trace Link's path to the port where Link had set out on boat.

Then, they faced a problem—Link's scent had ended there.

The Earth Hound went in circles outside and around the port, letting out small howls. It seemed to be quite frustrated.

"Master, he must have gotten on a boat. What do we do?" Terry asked.

"Obviously!" Holmes sneered. He stood by the dock and stared into the waters, thinking.

The next step came to him quickly. "Go, follow the river downstream. He can't have stayed on the river. He will have embarked somewhere."

"Master, what if he went upstream?" Terry asked, unsure.

Holmes felt that that the Warrior was downright stupid. Throwing him a sideways glance, he retorted, "There is probably a 100:1 ratio of Magicians who don't know how to row a boat versus a single one that does. So, do you think that we should look for him upstream or downstream?"

"Downstream."

Terry was convinced. Rowing against the currents was a skill, and hard work at that. Even he as a Warrior wasn't particularly good at it, let alone a weak-bodied Magician.

The Dark Elves followed along the riverbank, ignoring the people running amok in the Flower District. Truth be told, no one dared to approach the Assassins anyways.

About twenty minutes later, the Earth Hound let out a low howl and picked up its pace. It lowered its head and began to sniff the ground again.

"We found it!" Holmes cried out in glee. Tracking was actually a gamble. No one could tell how it would turn out, but this time he'd won.

Holmes could feel the respect and awe in the gazes of the other Dark Elves. He rather enjoyed it.

Without even realizing, he straightened his back and held his head higher.

Tracking Link has led them to the entrance of the marketplace. Though some figures darted around, the streets were, for the most part, desolate. But, the less people there were around, the less scents there were that could possibly impede their task. The Earth Hound tracked at a much faster speed than before.

After another hour, Holmes and the Dark Elf Assassins stood at the entrance to the Old City Quarters.

"This isn't good. He headed to the Old City Quarters. Could he have come here to save the female leader of the MI3?" Holmes frowned slightly. He knew that the Commander of the MI3 was another one of the Dark Elf Assassins' main targets. Their superiors had asked for her to be kept alive, not dead like the rest.

"Hurry up!" Holmes shouted. He had a bad feeling about this.

There were even fewer people around the Old City Quarters. As a result, the Earth Hound ran faster. Ten minutes later, Holmes reached the fountain square.

What they saw there was appalling.

The buildings around the square had been reduced to rubble by a fire. Smoke still rose from the buildings' remains, a sign that it hadn't been long since the flames had died.

More than ten bloody, mangled corpses laid on the square. Though it was difficult to tell from the bodies themselves, their build and rags of clothing that still remained on them identified them as Dark Elves.

Holmes, seeing the puddles of water, went up for a closer look. Using the back of his hand to touch it, he found that it was icy cold, some ice sludge still remaining.

"The power of magic... of the Lesser Hailstorm Spell. He was here!" Holmes frowned yet again. Not just because the other Magician had been here, but also because he sensed the power of high-level magic.

The Lesser Hailstorm was a Level-2 Spell. The young human Magician was a Level-2 Magician, not a Level-1 Magician as he had thought!

He's the same skill level as myself. This made things a little trickier.

But Holmes was confident in his Magic. The human Magician is young. He has no experience. Perhaps he has mastered the spell, but he definitely doesn't have superior magic abilities. I will definitely be able to beat him if I face him!

Dabbling in magic for as long as he had, Holmes had his own understanding of the art. That, was the source of his confidence.

Footsteps rang out behind him. He turned. It was Terry, with another Dark Elf Assassin. Holmes instantly recognized that the elf before him hadn't been part of his tracking team from earlier. That meant that he must have seen the battle at the fountain square!

"What happened here?" Holmes asked.

Shock and fear were still apparent on the Assassin's face. "It was a Magician! Dreadful Magic! He summoned a Hailstorm and killed the leader! He escaped with Annie Abel. Dark Mother above, it was horrible!"

"Which way did they go?" Holmes pressed on.

"I don't know. We lost them at a hotel. We went in, but we didn't find them. We couldn't find a secret passage though we searched all over for it." The Assassin looked miserable, fear hinting at his expression. He knew that he would be heavily punished for failing their mission.

"The hotel must have a secret passage!" Holmes looked towards the building in the distance, then back at the six-foot tall Earth Hound, and cursed, "Damn hotel!"

The Earth Hound was too big to fit through hotel's door.

But Holmes had a plan. Digging a secret passage is difficult. It won't be too long, and there isn't any significance to building it longer anyway. Six hundred to one thousand feet should be the maximum, he thought.

At this, he asked the Assassin, "How many of you are left?"

"Seventy-six of us," the Assassin replied.

"And where are they now?"

"We split up to look for the humans."

"Very good." Holmes paced for a while. Suddenly, something occurred to him. Why should I follow behind their asses? What is the first thing they'll do since they've escaped? Why can't I just lay in wait for them?

There was another important question; where would they most likely go?

The answer screamed in the face. It was painfully obvious.

"They're most likely going to go to the barracks of the city guard! Once they gain control of it, then it won't be something as simple as escaping. They'll even be able to turn the tables on us! No, that cannot happen, damn it!"

Holmes felt his heartbeat quicken. He found that it was no longer important whether the Magician or Annie Abel escaped. What was important, was that the city guard remained in chaos and useless.

Otherwise, when the human Magician and the head of the MI3 outpost entered the city guard, they would be unstoppable. They, as enemies who had infiltrated the city, would certainly die!

"Gather arms! We're going to Horus Castle!"

Horus Castle was the family castle of the Lord of the city, Hessman Horus. It sat in a valley, the furthest valley west of the city, in the northernmost region of the Old City Quarters.



The Lord of the city, Duke Hessman, had already been done in. His womanizing ways had been the end of him.

Three hours earlier, he had died in bed, killed by a beautiful human Assassin who had been painstakingly bred and trained by the Dark Elves for more than ten years. Truth be told, every human in the Horus Castle had been wiped out.

The city guards' barracks were quite close to Horus Castle. The Commander of the city guards had been poisoned a day ago. With most of its officers dead, the city guard was leaderless. Perhaps some had tried to restore the law and order, but they

didn't hold enough weight to pose a threat to the Dark Elves.

But now, Annie Abel and the Magician were both prominent figures, enough so that they could easily take hold of the situation. They had to be stopped.

In every race, Magicians held very high social statuses. Though not the official commander of the operation, Holmes had become the de-facto leader when the Commander and First Officer had died. The Dark Elf Assassins, needing someone to rally behind, naturally gathered around him. There was a total of 150 of them, including the Assassins Holmes had brought from the Magic Academy.

This formed most of the Assassins who had infiltrated Gladstone City. Helmed by a Level-2 Magician, they were a force to be reckoned with.

"Hurry up! We might still have time!" Holmes roared. With a snap of his fingers, the Earth Hound crouched, allowing him to climb onto it. Then the hound sprinted off.

The Dark Elf Assassins ran behind it.

The Earth Hound was fast, very fast. Soon, Holmes left the Assassins in the dust. It was risky, but he didn't care. Holmes believed that he had the power to deal with that human Magician, even if he had MI3 allies!

The Dark Elves, in their haste to stop Link and Annie, didn't notice a petite figure watching them quietly from a secluded corner of the fountain square.

It was the human Assassin Mary, whom Link had saved earlier. After the Elemental Healing and more than half an hour of rest, she had regained most of her strength.

"This isn't good. The Commander and that Magician are in danger; I need to warn them!"

Mary slipped into the hotel and down into the cellar. Deftly opening the door to the secret passage, she sped forward. She appeared at the exit, in the house within no time.

The young couple looked at her with surprise.

"Has the Commander been here?" Mary asked, rushing.

The husband nodded. "She was here. But she left not even three minutes ago."

"In which direction did she go?"

"I'm not too sure, but it was probably towards the North." As an external member of the MI3, he knew not to ask more than he was told.

"I understand. Seal the passage permanently, immediately. Anyone else who comes out from there is definitely an enemy!" Mary raised her voice as she said this.

The couple nodded hastily.

# Chapter 18

## The Power of Supreme Magical Skills!

It was half-past one in the morning by the time Mary had caught up to Link and the others.

In the game, this had been the time when the Dark Elf Army had launched their main attack. But now, thanks to Link, it was peaceful and quiet outside the city.

However, Link knew deep down in his heart that destroying the Portal Tower could only stall them for a little while. Their time was running out.

Mary continued on towards the city guards' barracks along with Link and the other human Assassins. She told them all about what she had seen and heard at the fountain square, leaving everyone speechless.

More than 150 Dark Elf Assassins was certainly a force to be feared, but even more so, was the Dark Elf Magician.

This was the real world, not a game. The imbalance of power couldn't be adjusted.

To outsiders, Magicians had wisdom far beyond the reach of other beings. Their magic was mysterious and powerful. Fear struck the heart of any Warrior facing a Magician simply because there was no way to know what the Magician had in store for you.

Very often, people were killed without even knowing what happened.

Their sheer intelligence was the reason for their complete domination.

There was a silence among them. Annie turned to look at Link. "Mr. Link, what do you think?"

To face a Magician, one needed another Magician. Annie had never been so grateful that Link was there. Otherwise, her subordinates would have been dead and she, captured. The possibility of turning the tides wouldn't have even been a thought to consider.

Link, fortunately, knew all about his opponent.

The Dark Elf Magician was named Holmes. He was a Level-2 Elite Magician specializing in both Elemental and Summoning Magic as well as a member of the Silver Moon Mage Council.

In contrast to the teachers at The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings, he was a true Battle Mage. As far as he knew, Holmes could use at least one Supreme Magic Skill—Swift Spellcasting!

Under that Supreme Magic Skill, Holmes could cast Level-1 Elemental Spell, Fireballs with incredible speed. His best record was casting 10 Fireballs within 1 second.

Level-1 Fireballs were the upgraded version of Level-0 Fireballs. They were also significantly more powerful. If Level-0 Fireballs were large firecrackers, Level-1 Fireballs were grenades.

In his last life, there had been a team of ten novices who had attempted to take Holmes down as they escaped Gladstone. They had been killed instead—all ten of them, with just a barrage of Fireballs.

Because of that, Holmes had gotten the nickname of Fire Canon.

All this information flashed through Link's head. Link compared himself to what he knew of Holmes. He knew not a single Supreme Magic Skill, though he had 20 Omni Points, 15 MP (Mana Points). Oh, and he also had a Level-2 Defensive Magic Item—the bracelet.

It seemed that he stood a chance as long as he had enough Mana!

At the thought, Link used 10 Omni Points on Maximum Mana Points without hesitation. He felt warmth envelope his body—he was full of Mana once more. Taking a look at himself, his Maximum Mana was now 241 Points and he held 118 Mana Points.

That was enough for him to go into battle.

Link thought quickly. "The Magician is very powerful. But I know his strength roughly from what Mary described. Don't worry. I can handle him!"

Holmes was just a Level-2 Magician. Link was once an Archmage, a Legendary Pinnacle. How could he lose in a battle of magic?

Annie breathed easy, "That's good."

The other Assassins also breathed a sigh of relief.

After running for about five more minutes, they saw the raised flag of the city guard. The Lord's castle could also be seen in the distance.

"Faster! Faster! We'll reach soon!" Annie yelled.

This urged the Assassins forward, their steps becoming quicker by the second.

Just then, Annie said, "Listen. There are footsteps behind us. Someone's approaching, and very quickly!"

Startled, Link was about to turn and look, but within that split second, he sensed a great wave of Mana coming towards them at an unbelievable speed.

He sensed the danger within it, as if a beast was reared up and poised to attack him from behind, its teeth already touching his neck!

The hairs on his neck stood on end.

The sense of peril was so pressing that Link barely paid attention to anything else and just activated his Band of Protection.

Magic lights flashed. A crystal clear glow quickly spread out from his wrist and over the rest of his body, blending into the gray robe he wore. His robe was covered with a thick, dense layer of light. Magic runes swirled within the light, making his robe appear extraordinarily grand and elaborate.

Guarding Barrier

Level-2 Spell

Effect: Strong defense against magical attacks but weak against physical attacks.

As soon as the spell took effect, Link caught a glimpse of a flash of fire from the corner

of his eye.

At the same time, he felt a push from behind him, making him stumble forward by a few steps. The push had felt mildly hot, and with it, an explosion had rung out from behind.

That wasn't all.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The explosions continued on, sparks and flames bursting out everywhere. Link spun around and saw the bluish-white, fist-sized fireballs whizzing through the air, each heading towards a human Assassin.

Each fireball exploded with a huge bang, flames spreading out into orbs that spanned more than three feet.

Within just two seconds, almost twenty Level-1 Fireballs had flown at them from almost 200 feet away.

Except for Annie, who managed to duck and defend against the balls of flame with her incredible speed and the strength of her Battle Aura, the rest of the human Assassins flew out from the impact of the explosions.

Ardivan and Mary weren't spared either. Charred from the flames, they were thrown out 15 to 20 feet. They spat out blood before passing out.

In just one blow, almost all the Assassins were wiped out. With the exception of Annie, they all had been fatally wounded.

Such was the power of a Magician with Supreme Magical Skills!

"It's Holmes! He doesn't just have the Swift Spellcasting ability; he also has the skill Distant Spellcasting as well!"

Holmes casted his Fireballs from almost 200 feet away, more than twice the normal range for an average Magician. It was unnerving!

Link, barely having any time to think or feel sad, countered immediately. He pointed his wand at a brick by the roadside. "Vector Throw!"

His opponent was too far, beyond his spellcasting range. His magical attacks wouldn't be able to reach. The only attack that stood a chance at hitting Holmes from this distance was Vector Throw.

The brick went flying with a whoosh towards the huge black figure in the distance. Link had already made out what it was—it was Holmes, sitting astride the Earth Hound he had summoned. He had come alone, before the other Dark Elves.

As an Archmage, Link had had an extraordinary grasp and control of his magic. His aim was exceptional, even using a semi-physical spell such as Vector Throw. The brick flew at Holmes' head.

Magicians' bodies weren't much stronger than commoners'. If he was hit, he would be severely injured if not die. Holmes urged the Earth Hound to duck to one side. Seizing his chance, Link slid over to Annie's side.

The Legendary Assassin to be had been awestruck by the terrifying display of magic. She hid, hyperventilating, in a corner. The mask on her face was gone, showing the fear on her white, delicate features. Her eyes brimmed with tears for her subordinates, whose life or death was still uncertain.

Without hesitation, Link raised a hand and brought it down with a hard slap across her face. The smack was crisp and clear. With it, five finger marks appeared on Annie's face. The pain brought her back to her senses. Clutching her face, she stared at Link in disbelief and confusion.

"Go! Quickly, to the barracks! I'll stop him!" Link barked.

This was Gladstone City's only chance to change to course of history!

At this, his wand flashed. A beam of light wrapped around Annie. He casted the Level-1 Spell, the Cat's Agility!

"Then what about you?" Annie asked anxiously. She knew that Holmes wasn't too far behind, and there were more than 150 Dark Elf Assassins following behind! How would Link fight them all single-handedly?

"Stop worrying about me and go!"

He pushed her out. With another flash of his wand, he used the Level-1 Spell, Vector

Throw on her.

Under the repelling force of the magic, Annie flew three feet into the air and into a second-story window.

"Link!"

Annie's sobbing shriek rang out from inside the window. She knew that Link had stayed back to stop the enemy from going after her. It meant that he had been ready to fight to his death.

The Magician prodigy had already saved her once tonight. And now, he would sacrifice his own life for her sake. The young girl's heart quivered, tears running down her face.

Link didn't hear her. His opponent was strong, but he had entered a serene calm and focused on his spellcasting.

His wand flashed with magic again as he casted Cat's Agility once more on himself. With a leap, Link shot out like a cat, charging towards Holmes.

Holmes could cast spells from much farther with his Distance Spellcasting ability. Therefore, Link needed to close the distance between them! Holmes, however, wouldn't let him get close so easily. Sitting astride the Earth Hound, he pointed his magic staff at Link and bellowed, "Fireball!"

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Under his Swift Spellcasting skill, fireballs rushed out of his staff, producing four of them almost instantaneously. They shot out towards Link in rapid succession.

Link was protected by the Guarding Barrier and impervious to the Fireballs, but the Guarding Barrier had its limits—it would disintegrate if it was hit by seven fireballs. He wouldn't let them hit him unnecessarily.

"Lesser Hailstorm!" Link cried.

An icy glow radiated from his wand. At the same time, Link ducked using Cat's Agility, successfully evading two incoming fireballs.

One second later, the Lesser Hailstorm took full effect. An Icy storm and hail swept around Link, closing off the narrow little alley.



If Holmes wanted to pass through, he would have to force his way through the storm. The high-speed Fireballs he heavily relied on would also have to pass through to attack Link.

But his Fireballs were just Level-1, while the Lesser Hailstorm was Level-2. The Lesser Hailstorm wouldn't give way without more than ten of Holmes Fireballs.

Holmes also didn't have much Mana left in him after having released 14 Level-1 Fireball Spells. He wouldn't have any Mana left if he continued using fireballs to break through the hailstorm. But he had plenty of battle experience under the belt, and so he countered Link's spell instantly. Pointing his staff towards the hailstorm, he roared, "Charge!"

The Earth Hound was a creature summoned from tightly knit Earth Elements and contained immense power. The Lesser Hailstorm was a chaotic mash of water and wind Elemental Magic. It might be able to damage the Earth Hound, but the beast would definitely be able to sink its teeth into the Magician, killing him before the storm disintegrated.

Once a Magician died, so did his magic.

Link and Holmes' battle was intense within just three seconds of their encounter. Victory and defeat, life and death could be all decided at any second!

# Chapter 19

## Meeting the Demon Princess, Again.

Attacking Magician's magic was useless. The most effective way was actually to attack the Magician himself. Every Magician knew that; Holmes knew it, and so did Link.

Link reacted immediately at the sight of the monstrous six-foot tall hound bounding towards him.

"Grease!"

A faint beam of light shot out of the hailstorm, landing on the ground in front of the Earth Hound and spreading out like a puddle of oil. The ground of the alleyway instantly became as slippery as ice, stopping 15 feet before and after where Link stood.

"You and your little tricks!" Holmes sneered. Grease was a Level-0 Spell. Overcoming it was a simple task for other Magicians.

"Sand!"

Bright light shot out of Holmes' staff. A small whirlwind containing vast amounts of sand suddenly appeared in the small alley. The spell suddenly disintegrated when the whirlwind blew onto the surface affected by Grease, covering the surface with rough grains of sand.

The Earth Hound ran over the ground safely, rapidly approaching Link and reaching the hailstorm in no time. It charged into the Lesser Hailstorm fearlessly despite the sharp shards of ice.

Link was now 130 feet away from Holmes. It was still further than his spells could reach, but his target was Holmes, not the Earth Hound.

In response to the Earth Hound bounding at him, Link did two things.

First, he canceled the trailing effect of the Lesser Hailstorm on himself. Second, he leapt backwards and then to one side using Cat's Agility. Under the protection of

Guarding Barrier, he left the safe zone of the Lesser Hailstorm and evaded the Earth Hound's attacks.

Leaving the hound to deal with the Lesser Hailstorm behind him, Link strode towards Holmes and pointed his wand at the ground behind him. "Vector Resistance Field!" he cried.

The air warped around the tip of Link's wand. At first glance, they looked like the heat waves left behind by a rocket.

The force field smashed onto the ground. Link, with one foot in the air after having taken a step forward, was pushed by the force field which had just bounced off of the ground. The rebound energy launched him high into the air.

Behind him, the Earth Hound turned. It had its eyes set on Link and Link alone. It rushed out of the Lesser Hailstorm and pounced at Link with its jaws wide open. But just then, Link shot forward, leaving it to close its jaws on thin air.

In that moment, Link flew towards Holmes at breakneck speed. The monstrous hound, however, caught up from behind, poised to bite Link's head off with just a snap of its jaw.

He would die when he landed. Link had only a fraction of a second to react!

Within that split second, Link focused his attention so intensely that the world around him seemed to slow down. Raising the New Moon Wand, he pointed at a fist-sized pebble on the ground.

Vector Throw! Vector Throw! Vector Throw!

Link had cast the Level-1 Spell three times within the blink of an eye!

A pebble flew off the ground towards Holmes each time he cast the spell. Despite taking only 0.3 seconds to cast, the pebbles flew swiftly and accurately towards their mark.

He hadn't been called an Archmage for nothing.

Throwing a pebble with Vector Throw, Link had never missed his mark—so long as it was within 100 feet.

Holmes' Swift Spellcasting ability was limited to casting Fireballs; those were his specialty. But each spell's mechanism was different. It was impossible for him, a mere Level-2 Magician, to perform a Swift Spellcasting skill with each of the countless spells in the universe. Thus, Holmes' spellcasting was far slower than Link's for all other spells.

Anticipating Link's next move, Holmes casted a defensive spell.

The reason was simple. His opponent was protected by a Level-2 Guarding Barrier. His Fireballs wouldn't be effective even if they managed to hit the human Magician. On the other hand, he himself would be vulnerable to the Vector Throws.

Holmes was a Magician, not a Warrior. Further, he was neither agile nor fortified with supporting spells such as the Cat's Agility. It would be difficult for him to duck or evade the oncoming, bullet-like pebbles.

The rocks were aimed right at his head. If even one of them hit their target, he would definitely be heavily wounded. He couldn't afford to let any of them get close!

He had neither enough time nor Mana to cast a Level-2 Spell. Holmes came to a quick decision.

"Ice Shield!"

Ice Shield

Level-1 Spell

Effect: Forms a shield of ice with water elements. An exceptional defense against both elemental magic and physical attacks.

The Vector Throw had been used on a pebble. It was a classic physical attack. Using the Ice Shield was the right choice.

Throughout this exchange, the only mistake Holmes had made, was to underestimate Link's spellcasting speed.

Link had cast the Level-1 Vector Throw Spell in less than 0.3 seconds. For Ice Shield, a spell of the same skill level, Holmes had taken slightly more than 0.4 seconds.

When the first pebble reached Holmes, he had only just cast the Ice Shield. Holmes had chosen the spell carefully based on his estimation of the time the pebble would take to reach him.

With a resounding clunk, the Ice Shield just managed to stop the pebble in its path. However, smashed to smithereens, the Ice Shield spell also disintegrated.

The next pebble followed right after the first.

Holmes wasn't fast enough to cast an Ice Shield in time. Facing the possibly fatal blow, he had no choice but to pull out his ace.

A ring flashed on his left middle finger. Light flowed from it, covering Holmes' entire body. It was similar to the Guarding Barrier Link wore, but it was neither as thick nor as bright.

It was a Level-1 Guarding Barrier. Link wore its upgraded version, Level-2 Guarding Barrier.

There was one problem, however. Guarding Barrier was a spell designed to defend against elemental magic. It was exceptionally effective against elemental attacks such as fireballs and wind blades, but it performed poorly when it came to physical attacks.

The pebble reached Holmes the moment the Guarding Barrier was completed. Thwock! It smashed onto Holmes' forehead with deadly accuracy.

The inferior Guarding Barrier presented some resistance towards the pebble, reducing some of the force, but most of it was still transferred onto Holmes' head.

Holmes' jerked back, his head dizzy, as he cut off the second Ice Shield which he had been in the middle of casting.

Horror filled his dark red eyes. "How can this kid cast spells so quickly?!"

It was terrifying. He didn't cast just the one spell quickly, but all of them!

Thwock! The incoming third pebble landed a second blow on Holmes' forehead.

His guarding barrier's first attempt at slowing the Vector Throw presented almost no resistance against the last remaining pebble.

Just picture a fist-sized pebble going at the speed of 160 feet per second towards someone's head. It was more than enough to knock someone out. With some luck on Link's side, it could even kill.

Link saw a faint depression on Holmes' forehead. Holmes' eyes rolled up as he fell backwards.

He'd been knocked out, that was certain. But was he dead yet?

Link finally landed on the ground, running a few steps to carry forward his remaining momentum.

The Earth Hound had been just two feet behind him, now at a crossroad between life and death.

Without its spellcaster sustaining it, the Earth Hound froze and cracked. One second later, the huge hound crumbled into a pile of sand with soft fwoosh.

"Vector Throw!" Link cast the Level-1 Spell once more, dealing out the finishing blow.

Thwock! This time, his attack landed on Holmes' temple, leaving another depression there. Without a flinch, groan nor sigh, Holmes' breathing, which had already been faint, stopped.

He was dead.

Throughout the battle, which had started with Holmes' ambush and ended with his demise, Link had used a Level-0 Spell, eight Level-1 Spells, and a Level-2 Spell, all of which had cost him 80 Mana Points, leaving him with just 38 Mana Points and 10 Omni Points left.

Looking at Holmes' dead body, Link stroked the now dull Band of Protection he wore. In his heart, he heaved a sigh of relief. Thank goodness I took the bracelet. Otherwise, I might have died.

Link's victory was partly due to his super-fast spellcasting, but the advantage the Level-2 Guarding Barrier Spell had was also an undeniable part of it.

Walking over, he picked up Holmes' magic staff.

Fire Crystal Staff

Quality: Sterling

Effect 1: Spells +30% power.

Effect 2: Spellcasting speed of fire elemental magic +10%

"This is good! So much better than the New Moon Wand. It can even increase my spellcasting speed. No wonder Holmes' Fireballs are like bullets from a gun, a lot of it was probably thanks to this staff."

Just then, a notification appeared in the corner of his eye.

Annie Abel has reached the city guard barracks.

Escort Mission completed.

Game Player Link receives 30 Omni Points.

Link now had 30 Omni Points more, which represented significant power. He smiled, but it turned bitter soon enough.

The reason was quite clear—dark figures surrounded him. It was the Dark Elf Assassins; they had caught up.

Link wasn't surprised, though. He had been prepared to face this when he had stayed behind to fight Holmes.

The Assassins don't seem to be in a rush to attack. Are they afraid? Or do they want to capture me alive and send me to the Black Forest?

The former seemed more likely. Holmes had died, leaving the Dark Elf Assassins without a leader. Avenging Holmes was probably the first thing on their minds, but they refrained due to the fear of Link's powers.

The Dark Elves were a threat larger than any he had ever faced tonight, but he still stood a chance.

Leaning onto the Fire Crystal Staff, Link stood. He had 40 Omni Points. He wondered

how he would escape as the Dark Elf Assassins hesitated.

Suddenly, a mocking but sweet-sounding voice rang out from beside him. "Link, you're giving up just like that? Why aren't you playing the hero anymore?"

The voice, infinitely familiar, made Link's heart skip a beat. He traced the voice to its source, a petite figure beside him.

It belonged to a woman with long black hair, eyes like the darkest night, a pair of little horns on her head, incredibly delicate features and red, soft lips that betrayed just a hint of the pair of small, sharp teeth that lay beneath them. The simple short robes she wore did nothing to hide the perfect curves of her small waist. Her trousers clung tightly to a pair of perfect, long legs. All the details brought erotic, sensual thoughts to mind.

It was the Demon Princess, the NPC who had stolen Link's heart!

With one hand raised to hold a hemisphere that looked like it had been made of obsidian, she left her other hand on her waist. Seen in profile, her pose accentuated her perfect curves as she turned to look at Link with interest. It was a tempting sight indeed.

Link was stunned. His heart racing, he hastily averted his eyes to the magic shield protecting them.

The shield was very strong. A group of Dark Elf Assassins attacked it with all their might. Yet, all was calm within.

Link recognized it. It was the Level-5 Dark Magic Spell, Obsidian Barrier. He put two and two together.

No wonder he had felt that she was familiar. Celine was Celine Flandre. What he had seen earlier was just her human guise. This was her true form.

"You... you're Celine?"

Link asked even as he thought, Celine Flandre. So we meet again.



# Chapter 20

## The Lonely Vagabond

Celine was still quite young; she was only 17 years of age. Compared to Link's image of her from the game, she looked a lot more innocent, less guarded and wary. Her powers, though far less powerful than before, were stronger than the norm.

Link tried to look at her information on the game interface, but all he got was a line of question marks. In the game, such a phenomenon only happened when players were more than 3 skill levels weaker than their targets.

Link now had the strength of a Level-2 Magician. Since Celine had used the Level-5 Obsidian Barrier Spell, Link inferred that she was at least Level-5.

Such power currently ranked her among the strongest 1000 throughout the Firuman Continent. It was enough for her to be a guest of honor at any kingdom.

Of course, this was all provided that she didn't expose herself as a demon, the public enemy of the Legion of Light.

The multitude of Level-2 Dark Elf Assassins could do nothing with her there. Grabbing Link by the arm, she sprouted black wings and took off with a mighty flap of her new appendages.

The Dark Elf Assassins, seeing their target suddenly leave the protection of the shield, started raining arrows on them, but a sword of blue crystal suddenly appeared in Celine's hand. She swung it around with incredible speed.

It was so fast that it appeared just like a light-blue haze.

The sound of the arrows being struck down by Celine's sword rang out clear and sharp as the fall of rain. Not a single arrow breached her defenses.

Then, Celine shot up to more than a 300 feet above the ground, beyond the reach of the arrows, leaving the Dark Elves gaping in her wake.

Just ten seconds later, Celine landed atop Gladstone City's clock tower. Link, still in a daze, just stared at her blankly.

"What? Cat got your tongue?"

The young maiden was captivating. Her red lips tweaked with the bare hint of a smile as she veiled her eyes and spoke with a voice as smooth as honey. She held an indescribable air about her.

Sweet, sweet evil. The description popped into Link's mind as memories from the game flooded back to him.

In the game *Legends*, there were four famous beauties—the Angel of Light, Herrera, the Red Dragon Queen Gretel, the Elf Princess Milda, and lastly, the Demon Princess, Celine Flandre.

The four beauties, who had been chosen by the game players for their spectacular looks and style, were each extremely powerful.

The demon mistress' personality, in particular, was like sweet poison. She was a goblet of enticing venom, drawing others deeper and deeper with her charms.

Celine's smile widened as she read Link's expression. She reached out and traced his face with her white, soft fingers. In a coy and enticing voice, she said, "What? Aren't you scared? I'm a demon, you know?"

With that, she bared her little fangs.

Link finally came back to his senses. He shook his head slightly to clear his mind. "You saved me. Why should I be scared of you?"

In the game, the mission leading up to unlocking the Ultimate Boss, Nozama, had been a long one. Link and the NPC, Celine, had spent a long time together. He knew her inside and out. Though she had a penchant for pranks and had an eccentric personality, she definitely wasn't one to kill without good reason. In that aspect, she drew a stark line between herself and the other demons.

Truth be told, she drifted around, evading her father's lackeys because she didn't want to be a true demon.

"Who said that I was saving you? You lied to me earlier. I'm very angry about that, I brought you out here to punish you!" Celine's dainty brows grew tight. She placed a slender white finger in front of her face. Her dark eyes, though fixed on Link, danced around his face, as if she really was considering what to do with him.

Link wasn't scared in the slightest, neither did he become complacent. Instead, he just waited patiently.

If he wasn't wrong, the quirky young maiden was probably coming up with a prank.

His behavior made Celine feel as if she was reprimanding a porcupine—there was nowhere for her to get her hands on. It was a strange, new experience for her. In the past, everyone ran away in fright whenever she had shown her demon appearance, regardless of how close they might have been. Why wasn't this human scared at all?

She circled Link. "Hey. I'm a demon. Can't you at least give me a normal reaction to that?"

"No, you're not really a demon," Link shook his head softly, "The demon part is just on the outside. In my eyes, you're still Celine, the kind girl who looked after me for a month after I broke my arm."

Speechless, Celine was really cornered this time. The playful, evil air around her vanished, and her voice grew cold and distant. "Human, you're not as naive as to think that I'd be swayed with just empty words of flattery, are you? I've seen many just like you—all so full of themselves."

The original Link, at the sight of Celine's cold and distant behavior, would have run off in fright.

But this Link knew that Celine behaved that way because his words had struck close to her heart. She had taken off that sweet, mischievous facade, and her indifference was just a way of protecting herself.

The half-blood demon was actually very lonely and sensitive. Thinking about it, it made sense. She had seen her mother killed by demons, and the mastermind behind

it had been her own father. It was already a miracle that she hadn't gone insane.

But Link didn't back down. Earnestly, he said, "A real demon wouldn't have saved me, nor would one have said so much to me. They would just have torn me apart and devoured my soul. Celine, what I see in your eyes is pain and loneliness. Can you tell me what you've been through?"

Celine's petite figure shuddered. It was the first time anyone had told her something like that. Before this, they had either been after her for her looks, or shied away from her demon identity. No one had ever cared about what she actually felt.

But this human seemed to be able to read her soul. Each word had rung true.

Celine was a mess inside. There wasn't a trace of the sensuality she had worn earlier. Taking a few steps back, she turned her face away and stared into the darkness under the clock tower in silence.

Link, too stayed silent, again waiting patiently.

At the top of the tower, gusts of the night wind caressed her thick black hair. Celine stood still as if she was a beautiful statue of a Goddess.

Her childhood memories flashed before her.

"Mother, why do I have these things on my head?" Celine had asked adorably while stroking the little nubs on her head. She was only five-years-old.

Her mother, that gentle, beautiful woman, hadn't hidden her disgust. "That's from your father," she replied briskly.

"Mother, I don't want to train anymore. I'm too tired." Celine had collapsed onto the ground in exhaustion—she was seven-years-old. Her mother cared for her every need tenderly, but she had done so with a stern hand.

"You must get stronger quickly! Your father won't let you go!" Her mother had been quite harsh about it, despite the sorrow hidden in her eyes,

"Ah! Mother, what happened to you? Who are you people?!" Her mother was sprawled in a puddle of her own blood, almost torn to pieces. Still somehow clinging to life, she rasped, "Celine, my daughter, don't... fall..." Celine was fourteen-years-old.

Her mother hadn't finished when the hideous creatures, shrouded in black miasma, had cut off her mother's head.

"Princess, the Lord has asked us to bring you home!" the heinous beings had said.

"Die!!!!" Celine had learned martial arts for many years by then— she had already been very powerful. The demons were completely defenseless against her as she slayed them with ease.

Having found out about her background, she disguised herself and wandered around to evade her father's clutches. Three months ago, she had come to The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

She had never really considered becoming a Magician and had only developed a passing interest in magic.

Celine remembered the times she had spent with Link.

"Mr. Morani, I think that staring at a lady the way you are is poor manners."

That had been two months ago. The first time the young man had laid his eyes on her, he had behaved rather oddly, as if he had lost his soul. Of course, Celine hadn't thought much of it. She had seen so many others like that during her travels.

That fact that such an inconspicuous boy had brought her away from the academy at risk to his own life, had been completely beyond her expectations. Yet he had done it.

Celine had to admit that the human now held a special place in her heart.

She had bottled her secret for so long. When Link brought it up, she stayed silent for a while before opening her mouth in spite of herself. "My father is the Lord of the Deeps. He wants me to go back to the Deeps to become his vassal. For that, he sent his subordinates into the Firuman Continent to capture me. All I can live is a life of hiding, of drifting from place to place. My mother, a beautiful woman, was torn to pieces

before my eyes. She had tried to protect me. For my mother's sake, I cannot become a puppet of the dark."

Towards the end, her spirits sunk. She lowered her head as her beautiful brows drooped. After her long speech, she sighed heavily, her face full of loneliness.

She was a demon, the symbol of darkness and terror, the public enemy of the world of the light. Demons were attacked by all other creatures around them. Yet, she had grown up in the world of the light—deep in her heart, it was the place that she had acknowledged as home.

That was why she was damned to live a life of pain and loneliness!

"This is indeed a lonely journey." Link sighed.

# Chapter 21

## The Last Part of the Mission

Celine was a little disappointed at Link's silence. She laughed in self-mockery. "You don't believe me. Because I'm a demon. Demon's lie all the time."

All the texts of the world of light claimed that demons were the darkest and vilest beings in existence. Demons were taboo. According to the game Legend, demons who appeared in the world of the light brought about bloody catastrophes.

"I believe you!" Link's voice was firm and strong

This Celine was different than one he had known in the game. The Celine he had known then had been cynical and eccentric with a deep love of pranking others. But the Celine before him now was more like a normal girl. She was still innocent, trusting, and longed for friendship.

Yes, in the game, I met her after 20 more years of hiding and running, friendless and alone. Such a life would have twisted anyone's personality. But now, she's still hopeful.

Looking at Celine's clouded, beautiful eyes, Link repeated, "I believe you."

"Why? You're saying that because you're scared of me, aren't you?" Celine looked at him. Though suspicion glinted in her eyes, it was overshadowed by hope.

She could hear the earnestness in his voice. But her past experiences made her wary of humans words.

Link shook his head. Without thinking, his mouth opened to recite one of Celine's most used quotes, "No one can choose the circumstances of their birth, but they can choose their own paths! It may be long and difficult, but that is true freedom!"

Celine paused, rolling the words over her tongue. Light shone through the clouds in her eyes. "Yes, I am free! My father will never bind me!"

Gaining new strength and conviction, she turned to Link and spoke to him from the bottom of her heart, "Link, you are wise indeed, and forgiving. No wonder you received divine revelation. I'll remember what you told me, my friend."

"I, too, am honored to have known you. Thank you for saving me Celine, or I would have already been dead." Link smiled.

"Hahahaha," Celine laughed heartily. She suddenly felt relaxed, not caring for her image anymore. Not a trace of her previous mischievous demeanor was left. Now, she seemed more like a friendly neighborhood girl than anything else.

Then she asked, "You seem very different tonight. Can you tell me about your divine revelation?"

She was still curious about Link's change.

Link rubbed his nose. How should he put it? Telling her about things like coming from Earth, his soul crossing over dimensions to possess this body, and the game server didn't seem quite right.

He explained after some thought, "Actually, my understanding of magic is the same as it was before, that of a poor student at the academy. But somehow, there's a lot more Mana inside me, and with it, a sea of memories of spellcasting. Truth be told, all I know about magic is how to use it—I still have no idea how or why it works.

For that reason, he was only a normal Level-2 Magician, not an Elite. It was rather embarrassing. For the same reason, all his spells were just Basic. As for Supreme Magic Skills, he had none, neither had he any idea of how to acquire one.

Celine understood but she still burst out into laughter. "What an embarrassing situation. It looks like you'll need to find a chance to learn magic properly."

"I definitely agree." Ever since Link had seen Holmes' Supreme Magic Skills, he had known that he would have to get stronger much faster. He'd also thought about how he'd do that. "So I'll look for a magic academy when Gladstone City's issue is over."

"Oh. Do you have any particular academy in mind?"



"I'm thinking about East Cove Higher Magic Academy." It was the most famous magic academy in the Norton Kingdom. The dean was a Level-7 Master Magician.

At this time, a Level-7 Master Magician was the highest existence in the World of Firuman. Few held such power within the human world.

Celine was taken aback but she couldn't resist a smile. "You would, would you? Let me ask you, what is the structure of magic in a Fireball?"

"...I don't know." Link was dumbfounded.

"What about that of a Whirlwind....? You don't know that either? Then you should know how the simplest Earth Spike works, since you use it so well..." Celine held out her hands, solidifying her point, "Okay. If that's the extent of your magic theory, I think that you don't need to pay the East Cove Magic Academy a visit."

The East Cove Magic Academy was the best academy for magic within the kingdom, but it was a higher academy. It didn't accept students who didn't already have a strong foundation in magic. The students would have a hard time keeping up even if they did.

Even Celine wasn't confident about enrolling there.

Link was a little shocked. The real world of Firuman was different from that in the game after all. He'd thought too lightly of it. But whether or not he would manage to get in, he still would have to try to find out.

Of course, all of that would come later. There was no need to think so hard about it yet, especially not now of all times.

"Let's not talk about it yet. Gladstone is still in danger. I need to save it!"

Celine couldn't hold back her laughter once again. It was a friendly laugh, but still mocking. "What do you think you can do with your current strength? It took great efforts to get you out of there. Can you not keep running to your death?"

Celine was a Level-5 Warrior with exceptional talent in magic; even she was nothing

before the Dark Elf Army, let alone a half-baked Magician like Link.

"It won't do now, but I have a plan!" Link chuckled. He had already thought it through. Though he had planned to go alone, his chances of succeeding were even higher with Celine around.

"Just tell me." Celine had no idea what they could do. Unless Link suddenly became a Master Magician like the dean of the East Cove Magic Academy, there was no chance for them.

"I need to go to the Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings. The key to our success is in there."

The magic academy had everything a Magician could need. Potions, gear, and more importantly, something very powerful—powerful enough to let them turn the tides on the Dark Elf Army.

That was his target!

"I can bring you there, but I want to know, what is Gladstone to you that you're working so hard to save it?" Celine still didn't understand. She had thought that it would be alright for them to just leave the city. There wasn't a need to put up such a struggle because this place was doomed anyway.

Link kept quiet. He looked towards the city guard's barracks. It was brightly lit, and soldiers walked out in tidy profile. It looked like Annie had managed to gain control. If that was so, the Dark Elf Assassins in the city were no longer a threat.

He turned towards the North. From the winds, he sensed an overwhelming dark force getting closer and closer.

The Dark Elf Army had arrived.

By the looks of it, they would launch their attack on Gladstone within half an hour.

The Black Iron Garrison was too far, more than 60 miles away. They needed to delay

the advance of the Dark Elf Army for at least an hour if they were to save Gladstone.

Suddenly, something flashed in the corner of Link's eye. A new mission!

Ultimate Mission: The Final Battle

Mission Details: Protect Gladstone City. Ensure that it isn't invaded by the Dark Elf Army within the next hour.

Mission Reward: 100 Omni Points.

A huge reward for a difficult task. Link accepted it without any hesitation.

The things he'd experienced tonight made him realize something important. The kind of person he became depended on the path he chose. Link wanted to be an almighty Archmage in the World of Firuman, so he chose to fight in spite of the obstacles.

After accepting the mission, Link looked Celine in the eye, a fire burning brightly within his pupils.

"Yes, the city has nothing to do with me. I may die, but I may also get stronger because of it. Celine, I will become the world's strongest Magician!"

He left some words unsaid. He would get stronger until he was able to confront the Lord of the Deeps. He would rid the world of the Demi-God Nozama just like he had in the game!

Celine was stunned. She thought that Link was a little crazy, but in her heart, he was already a true friend of hers. "That's bold of you," she held out her hands and shrugged, "But I'll bring you to the magic academy anyway. I'll take you away from Gladstone when you've failed."

"Thank you." The fire in his eyes suppressed along with all his other, stray thoughts. He returned to a calm mindset, allowing him to concentrate on his future task.

Tonight, he'd give it his all!

# Chapter 22

## Each Second Counts!

Lorde, at just 35 years of age, was already the youngest Level-6 Warrior of Pralync, the country of the Dark Elves.

The Warriors of the Firuman Continent developed their Battle Aura at Level-3. At Level-6, they could unleash their Battle Aura beyond the boundaries of their bodies as ranged attacks.

Before Level-6, however, a Warrior had to risk being attacked as he attempted to get close to an enemy Magician. But at Level-6, they gained the strength they needed to truly confront Magicians.

In the world of the Dark Elves, strength was equivalent to status. The young Dark Elf prodigy, Lorde, had been appointed as the marshal of the Dark Elves' ambush on Gladstone City.

The Dark Elf Army, now just five miles away from Gladstone City, could already see the city's high walls and the spire of the clock tower when they looked towards the East.

Their plan hadn't been carried out as smoothly as Lorde had imagined.

The scouts he sent out came back with waves of bad news that made Lorde's face as dark as the stormy sea.

"Marshal, there are still guards on Gladstone's city walls!"

"Marshal, the northern doors have not been opened as planned."

"Marshal, there are at least 2000 guards on Gladstone's city walls! All of the defensive units along the walls have been deployed!"

There was dead silence from Lorde and his generals.

The Dark Elf Assassin from the city earlier hadn't told them anything like that. All he

had said was that most of the prominent figures in the city had been killed, and that Gladstone City's Magicians had been wiped out. The only accident throughout the entire operation had been the destruction of the Portal Tower in the Magic Academy. Because of that, they had had no other choice but to send someone with the bad news.

But now, it looked as if there had been more major disturbances within the past couple of hours.

"Bring the Assassin here!" Lorde seethed at the Dark Elf's shortcomings.

The Assassin who had sent the message was brought over quickly. He knew that all was not well when he saw Lorde and the generals' expressions. His legs turning to jelly, he stumbled and fell.

He scrambled to his feet, shaking as he walked up to the Marshal and addressed him respectfully. "Marshal, I am here."

Lorde's handsome face was so ominous it looked as if a black hole might swallow him up at any moment. His ruby eyes pierced through the Assassin before him. "This is your last chance. Are you hiding anything from me?"

The Assassin started to shake uncontrollably. After a while, he stammered, "Marshal... Jiggs is dead. He was killed by a young Magician,... the... the same one who destroyed the Portal Tower. Master Holmes had been on his tail when I was sent here."

Lorde's eyes narrowed. "A young Magician?"

A general beside him said softly, "Marshal, it seems like Holmes was no match for the young Magician. He was defeated as well."

This was war. Defeat meant death!

Lorde felt a migraine coming on. Holmes was a member of the Silver Moon Mage's Guild, and not one of his own soldiers. Holmes' mission hadn't been to fight either, he'd just been there to use the Portal Tower! Now that Holmes was dead, the Magicians from the Mage Guild would come after him again.

The anger in his heart grew. Glaring coldly at the Assassin, he asked, "And why didn't

you say all this earlier? Hmmn?"

The Assassin collapsed onto the ground. He knew his end was near.

Lorde waved a hand. Two Dark Elves came up and dragged the messenger away. Soon, a shrill scream rang out. The Assassin had been killed.

"Marshal, what do we do now?" asked another of the generals.

Lorde sneered, "Gladstone City's leaders have all been killed. The 2000 troops guarding the city are just a useless pack. With haste, attack the city!"

He had 20,000 Warriors and he himself was a powerful, Level-6 Warrior. He was further aided by the generals, each of whom who were powerful in their own right. Gladstone City's powerful fighters had been wiped out. The 2000 troops guarding the city were just average soldiers. Who could stop them if Lorde and his generals took the city by force?

The strength of his military gave Lorde the confidence that he would be able to take Gladstone before the human reinforcements arrived.

By then, he would be able to guard the city even against Gladstone's allies, the Black Iron Garrison when they arrived. He would be honored among the Dark Elves when the sacrificial rites within the city were completed!

"Marshal, it's a little risky. If..." one of his generals advised.

If they didn't manage to take Gladstone before the human armies arrived, they would be in great danger.

"You dare to question me!" Lorde barked, his red eyes blazed at the general.

Within the Dark Elves, the strong were greatly respected. The general backed down immediately. "No, of course not, Marshal. Your word is my command!"

Lorde snorted coldly and gave the orders. The Dark Elf Army began to advance much more quickly than before.

....

In the East.

An army made its way North as fast as it could on a wide highway. Marshal Allonse, a defender of the Black Iron Garrison, led the army.

Allonse was also a Level-6 Warrior. He had led his troops out immediately after receiving the word that the MI3 outpost in Gladstone needed aid.

There were 15,000 troops were stationed at the Black Iron Garrison. He had brought 10,000 with him and left the rest to guard the garrison under his second-in-command.

From the report, Allonse knew that the situation was urgent—he also forwarded the news to the capital. He believed that he would be able to defend the city against the Dark Elves' attack so long as he managed to enter Gladstone before them.

If he managed to hold the city for some time, until aid came from the capital, the Dark Elf Army would have no choice but to retreat or be annihilated.

"Faster. Faster!" Allonse kept urging.

Time was of the essence. With each second that went by, the outcome of the battle could be drastically affected. Whether Gladstone fell to the Dark Elf Army, or if they, the Black Iron Garrison, managed to protect the citizens of the Norton Kingdom and beat off the pariah elves—everything depended on who entered the city first.

Fwoosh. Fwoosh. Strong winds blew through the sky. It was the Griffin Special Command Unit of the Black Iron Garrison.

Fifteen Griffins flew in a V formation in the sky. The Magician Osmu sat on the Griffin at the front, his wand glowing softly, guiding the flock towards Gladstone.

Osmu, a Level-3 Magician skilled in Elemental Magic, was a Battle Mage from the Violet Council who was stationed at the Black Iron Garrison. Griffins were normally unsuited for battle in the dark, but under the guidance of the soft, magical glow from Osmu's wand, the huge, fierce beasts swiftly carried 15 powerful Warriors towards their destination. These were the Warriors chosen from among the troops at the Black Iron Garrison to form a suicide squad.

The Griffins would send the Warriors into Gladstone City to help stabilize the current state of affairs and do their best to delay Gladstone's fall into the hands of the Dark Elf Army.

The mission was exceptionally dangerous, with only a slight chance of survival. That was why each member of the suicide was a powerful Warrior of at least Level-3. The strongest among them was Minx, a Level-4 Warrior, an officer with the rank of Major in the Black Iron Garrison. He held another identity—the younger brother of Lord Derrick, the Earl of Maple County in the East, who himself was a knight of the kingdom.

As for the Magician Osmu, he wouldn't join in the battle unless another Magician appeared from the enemy camp. Otherwise, he would just leave Gladstone City after guiding the Griffins there.

No one would or could force him to join, because Magicians were few and far in between. They were too precious to use in normal skirmishes such as this. Rough jobs like this were for Warriors.

Griffins flew extremely fast; Gladstone City was within their sights within half an hour.

From the sky, they could see the guards patrolling the brightly lit eastern walls of the city. And towards the North, black, shadow-like masses approached.

The good news was that Gladstone City hadn't fallen yet. It had even managed to put up some defenses. The bad news was that the Dark Elf Army had already arrived.

The Magician Osmu slowly descended until he reached about 300 feet above the city—then he cast a spell towards the ground.

The Griffins flew down, guided by the light. One by one, Osmu cloaked each of the warriors that passed him with the defensive spell, Rock Armor.



## Rock Armor

### Level-2 Defensive Spell

Effect: Thick, heavy Earth elements form a strong, sturdy magical armor. It is especially good at defending against physical attacks.

Magic flashed non-stop. Thick layers of ochre yellow light appeared on the 15 powerful Warriors. The light was so dense that it looked just like a layer of yellow crystal.

Having cast more than 14 Level-2 Spells continuously, Osmu had used up more than half of his Mana. "Minx, the battle after this is up to you all!" He bellowed.

"Don't worry!" Minx said as he took the shield from off his back and ran towards the city wall.

Osmu watched Minx as he faded into the distance. Urging his own Griffin, he circled and left Gladstone City for the Black Iron Garrison, followed by the other 14 Griffins.

He had accomplished his mission of sending the suicide squad to its destination.

....

At the same time, Link and Celine reached The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

How could one get strong fast in the World of Firuman? Gear, potions, and buff.

All these could be found in the Magic Academy, and he had come here to gain power.

# Chapter 23

## The Treasure of the Academy

The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

Some Dark Elf Assassins still milled around the academy, but Celine disposed of each of them with just a swipe of her sword.

Then, she and Link foraged through the entire academy. They searched the library, the dean's tower and all the other mysterious towers around the school. Yet they found not a single piece of valuable gear. Even the low-level magic wands in the Apprentice Dorm were nowhere to be found.

"We're really unlucky. The Dark Elf Assassins took everything," Link sighed.

Almost everything of value was gone. Throughout their search, all they had found was a stack of basic magic books and a small pile of around 1300 gold coins.

They had found more than 50 magic books and more than 20 pounds worth of gold coins. Link couldn't carry all that, so he just left them in the care of Celine. The demon princess had dimensional storage items, and so could hold as many items as she wanted.

This world had dimensional storage items that could be used as portable storage, but such gear was extremely expensive. The most basic dimensional storage ring cost 3000 gold. Link didn't even dare to think about such a thing at this point.

They left the Alchemy Tower for last.

The doors to the Alchemy Tower had been broken down. When they walked in, they saw a mess and several corpses lying on the ground. The Dark Elves hadn't managed to take most of the alchemy equipment as they were too large and heavy, so they had just destroyed it instead. The cabinet that stored the alchemy materials had been left in disarray, excluding the valuable materials, which were all gone.

But since the Dark Elves hadn't had much time, they'd left some things behind in their

haste.

One of the drawers in the potions cabinet was only half open. Link walked over, pulled it out, and saw a crystal vial containing a light blue liquid.

The interface showed its information:

Low-level Mana Potion

Quality: Normal

Effect: Raises a Magician's Mana by 100 Points after drinking it.

(Note: The potion is slightly toxic. Do not consume more than 1 vial per day.)

Link took a vial out, pulled off the cork, and chugged it down.

He felt some discomfort in his stomach once he swallowed it, a side effect of the potion. But at the same time, a cool sensation spread across his body and finally concentrated within his head. His mind instantly felt much clearer.

He checked his stats again. He now had 145 Mana Points.

Not bad. It was enough to deal with just a few opponents, but far from enough to slow the advance of the Dark Elf Army. Link foraged further and found another crystal vial full of a light green solution.

Low-level Mana Recovery Potion.

Quality: Normal

Effect: After drinking, Mana Recovery Speed doubles for two hours.

(Note: Drinking multiple vials does not further increase effect.)

Link drank it without hesitation. His Mana Recovery Speed became 27.6 Points per hour.

But it still wasn't enough!

The alchemy hall only had basic potions. Flemmings Magic Academy was a Lower Academy that only served to provide introductory studies after all.

But no matter how inferior, all magic institutions had treasures of their own!

The Alchemy Tower held the Flemmings Magic Academy's prized possession, Link's target and ultimate objective of returning here!

He walked around inside the Alchemy Tower, finally stopping before a tapestry. A smooth wall stood behind it. If his senses weren't wrong, it was probably a magic door!

Magic Door

Level-3 Magic

Effect: Creates a flawless, solid screen—the ideal way to seal a passage.

The Magic Door was cleverly concealed. It blended perfectly into the walls beside it. Finding it would have been an impossible task for one not familiar with magic.

The Dark Elves were all outsiders to magic, so the magic door had been left untouched. This made Link rather relieved. The door being intact meant that the academy's Magicians hadn't had time to use what was behind it.

"Celine, can you open this door?" Link asked.

"Of course. Not a problem," she smiled. Taking out her crystal, blue sword, she strode over and swung it at the door.

With a loud boom, the jade-like, smooth magic door leading to the hall on the second floor was forced open.

With Celine's power, destroying the Level-3 Spell protecting the door had been as easy as crushing an egg.

A spiral staircase appeared behind the door. Link strode in and followed the stairs up into a small, secret room on the second floor.

The room was empty except for a square cabinet three feet wide, sitting in the middle. The cabinet was dark purple, the color of precious mahogany, and had gold wire embellishing its edges. It looked extremely grand.

Link heaved a sigh of relief at the sight of the cabinet. Despite the game having been made much more crudely, it looked as if the crucial details were still the same.

He had read about the treasure chest in the game forums.

There was a novice Magician who had somehow managed to break down the hidden, Level-3 Magic Door and found the secret room behind it. There had been a grand chest in the room.

When the game player had opened the chest, he had found an incredible potion inside it. After drinking it, the game player's strength had increased exponentially, allowing him to defeat and slay all the Dark Elves on the academy grounds, including the Magician Holmes!

Link quickly walked up to the chest and tried to open it, but the thin, clear film of light indicating the presence of a magic seal enveloped it. There was no way he could open it with his current powers.

"Let me." Celine walked over, preparing to break it open by force.

"Don't!" Link stopped her hastily.

Though he didn't recognize the seal, he could feel the Mana flowing within it. He had the feeling that if they destroyed it with brute force, the Mana in the seal would explode. The explosion wouldn't be strong, but it would be enough to destroy the contents of the chest, leaving him with nothing.

"Then what should we do?" There was no way such a beautiful chest didn't contain anything.

"Let me see."

Link closed his eyes and made a mental map of the flow of Mana within the chest. After about five seconds, he used his wand to tap three of the magic runes. "These three runes are probably the key to it. If we can destroy them at the same time, the magic seal should disappear."

He had no real proof for this course of action, but they were the meridians where the channels of Mana met each other.

"Destroy them... at the same time?" Celine asked, uncertain.

"It probably won't cause a chain reaction if you manage to destroy them all within a split second," Link said.

"That's easy."

Celine walked up to it, the blue crystal sword in her hand moving so fast it blurred.

She struck three times within a split second, making a small cut on each of the runes, immediately rendering them ineffective.

The magic seal started to break down a second later. A dent appeared in the film of light, growing larger and larger until the whole seal disappeared altogether.

Link sighed in relief and walked up to open the chest.

It was almost empty. The only object within it had been placed in the middle—a crystal bottle of amber potion that glowed like the moon. It was beautiful.

The game interface refreshed to show the potion's information.

Magical Murmurs: An Epic Potion. The prized possession of The Lower Magic Academy of Flemmings.

Effect: The one who drinks it shall receive the "Blessing of Magical Murmurs". With it, all spells cast will have a 100% increase in power and a 30% increase in speed. Player's Maximum Mana Points will be restored, along with an increase of 1000 Points, and Mana Recovery Speed will increase by 1000 Points per hour. At the same time, the one who drinks it shall receive the protection of the mid-level Mage's Armor. This "blessing" lasts for two hours, after which the bearer shall enter a state of "ailing mana" for three months, during which all Mana stats shall be reduced by 90%.

What a potion!

Though the side effects were formidable, within those two hours, he would be able to gain unbelievable strength. No wonder the novice had been undefeatable after drinking it!

Link, who had already learned many spells and still had 40 Omni Points tucked away, would be like a tiger sprouting wings with the potion!

But instead of drinking it, Link passed it to Celine.

"You are stronger than I am. You drink it!" If Link could be compared to a winged tiger with the potion's effects, then Celine, at least a Level-5 now, would be akin to a nuclear weapon.

Unexpectedly, Celine seemed ashamed. "I don't actually know magic," she admitted.

"What about the Obsidian Barrier from earlier?" Link asked, surprised.

"That's a Bloodline Talent. I rely mainly on battle skills... This is a magic potion, right? It's not going to be of much use if you give it to me, and I'm a demon... I'm afraid..."

"I didn't think that through properly." Link understood what she was saying. Celine's demon identity couldn't be exposed, or it would bring her great trouble.

So only he could drink the potion.

Pulling out the cork, he poured the contents of the small crystal bottle into his mouth. He felt a boiling sensation. The feeling was somewhat like drinking fizzy drinks, but the fizz was far stronger than anything he'd ever experienced.

The potion was still boiling by the time it hit his throat. It rushed into Link's stomach like a ball of fire.

Boom.

Link felt something explode within his stomach, but it was painless. Then, immense, uncontrollable waves of power surged into his limbs. At the same time, his mind

became clearer than it had ever been before.

The add-on effect of the potion, the mid-level Mage's Armor, also appeared on him. Runes, covered by an inch of glass-like, yellow crystals, appeared on the surface of Link's robes.

The mid-level Mage's Armor was Level-5 Magic. It looked similar to the Guarding Barrier, but the color and shape of the runes were very different. Their properties, too, lay on opposite ends of the spectrum. This particular armor wasn't very effective against magical attacks despite being exceptionally good at defending against physical ones.

Wearing the spell was as good as wearing thick metal armor!

For a moment, Link felt that he was untouchable.

He checked his current stats.

Link Morani (Noble)

Level-2 Normal Magician

Mana Recovery Speed: 1027.6 MP per hour

Maximum Mana: 1241

Current Mana 1241

Current Gear: Fire Crystal Staff

Current Condition: Low-level Mana Recovery Potion, Magical Murmurs

Currently in use: Mid-level Mage's Armor

With such a high Mana Recovery Speed and Maximum Mana Points, and with the potion's effects lasting for two whole hours, Link suddenly felt the long-lost sensation he had had as an Archmage in his last life.

With this newfound power, what spells should he exchange his remaining 40 Omni Points for?



Link looked at the rapid recovery speed of his Mana. Without hesitating, he exchanged the Omni Points for the Level-4 Spell, Flame Blast!

Flame Blast

Level 4 Spell

Mana Cost: 320

Effect: Create a large, powerful ball of flame that can shoot beyond 50 meters!

(Note: Causes everything to burn!)

Without Supreme Magical Skills, even Link needed more than 3 seconds to cast a Level-4 Spell, at a cost of 320 Mana Points each time.

But the harsh casting requirements were definitely worthy of the spell's terrifying power!

Link also had the Fire Crystal Magic Staff which increased casting speed by 10% on top of the 30% increase from Magical Murmurs. When it came down to it, he would only need 1.8 seconds to cast each Flame Blast.

At the same time, the power of his Flame Blast would increase by 130%, far more than the Basic version and almost as good as having a Supreme Magical Skill.

Yes, Link wouldn't be able to use the Spell for a long time after the effects of the potion wore off, but tonight, his enemies would burn.

Let everything burn!

# Chapter 24

## The Battle On the City Walls

It was 3:35 in the morning. The cold dawn of early fall weather caused one's breath to mist.

...

The northern city walls of Gladstone.

The color from Annie's rosy cheeks drained as she watched the Dark Elves surging over the city like a dark tide.

There were just too many. It looked as if there were at least 15,000 of them.

She had entered the city guards' barracks and managed to gain control of 1500 city guards. With them, she had cleaned up the remaining Dark Elf Assassins lingering on the streets and recruited any wandering Warriors she could find.

She'd tried her best, but there hadn't been enough time. Even now, there were less than 2000 Warriors manning the city walls, and most of them were unseasoned, new recruits.

Looking around, Annie saw fear and uncertainty on their faces. Some of them were even shaking. Each of them knew that they had just a small chance of making it out of this battle alive.

She suppressed the fear in her own heart and spoke up.

"Straighten up! Let those damned bloody-eyed elves taste our strength!" she shouted loudly, attempting to raise the troops' morale, "Soldiers, our city walls are tall and strong—we have crossbows! We have trebuchets! We have nothing to fear!"

Before she could finish speaking, a terrible battle cry rang out from the Dark Elf Army below as they filed into their ranks below the city walls.

"Kill!!!"

It had obviously been let out by a single elf, but like a clap of thunder, it shook the entire battlefield.

Annie's heart skipped a beat. As the daughter of a duke and the head of an intelligence agency, she had significant knowledge and experience. She instantly recognized her opponent's skill level just from his voice alone.

Crap, this opponent is a Level-6!

She was as good as a child in front of such an enemy. No one could stop him if he were to charge into the city. The Dark Elf Army followed his lead.

"Kill!!! Kill!!! Kill!!!"

Their battle cries came in like a multitude of tsunamis. The 2000 soldiers on the city walls were like little boats adrift the terrible waves, about to topple over and get washed away at any moment.

"God, there's just too many of them. There's no way we can stop them!"

"No, I'll die! I can't, not here!"

"Let's make a run for it!"

The voices were all from the soldiers who had been drafted at the last minute. Though the regular city guards wore pale faces, they showed no signs of giving up, perhaps due to the training they had received.

Without needing a signal from Annie, a city guard strode over and chopped off the head of a new recruit who was trying to desert with one swing of his sword.

Annie's eyes constricted. She'd never experienced war, and all its cruelty. She could be harsh and ruthless to her enemies, but not towards her own. Knowing it was necessary, she suppressed her misgivings and bellowed in rage, "We are the last line of defense for Gladstone! Deserters will be killed on sight!"

This shook many of the new recruits to their core, stabilizing the situation on the city wall.

...

Below.

With the night vision of a Dark Elf and the sharp eyes of a powerful Level-6 Warrior, Lorde saw everything on the city walls. He laughed, saying to the generals beside him, "Look, a little girl, leading a pack of cowards. How is it any different from just opening up the gates for us?"

All the generals saw what was going on. The few who had been uncertain made up their minds, and rushed to volunteer, "Marshal, let me be the first wave to attack."

They wanted to take the glory of such an easy battle.

Their enemies were few and weak. In contrast, the Dark Elf troops were eager and in high spirits.

Lorde laughed haughtily. He picked several of his generals at random. "You, you, you, and you. Lead the Warriors to attack the city!"

"Yes, Marshal!"

The four generals accepted his command. Each of them led several battalions carrying grappling hooks and charged at Gladstone's walls.

Gladstone was just a small city in the Norton Kingdom. Its walls weren't very tall—they stood at less than 50 feet. Of the generals chosen to attack it, three were Level-3 Warriors while one was a Level-4 Warrior. As long as they managed to climb up the walls, no one would be able to stop them.

Annie watched as the Dark Elves attacked the city ferociously. Each of them glowed with Battle Aura, one of which who glowed brighter than all the rest. This gave her quite a lot of pressure.

He's much stronger than me. I'm no match for him! I can't let them get up here!

Inside Annie panicked. "Attack!!!" she yelled.

The archers rained arrows down on their enemies. The crossbows howled, releasing bolts as thick as children's arms. Several trebuchets flung stones the size of basketballs down at the Dark Elf troops below. Their vicious attacks managed to cause some damage to the Dark Elves, but their largest threat, the powerful Dark Elf generals, remained unharmed.

Due to the Battle Aura enveloping them and the thick, heavy shields they held, the elves were easily able to evade the bolts and stones despite the human soldiers' heavy rain of attacks. Their speed was also completely unaffected—they were now less than 160 feet away from the city walls.

The Level-4 Dark Elf General swung a large grappling hook around in the air, slowly accumulating speed until he finally let it fly out of his hands and shoot up onto the city wall like an arrow.

Ka-thunk. The hook lodged into one of the battlements, and the general pulled it tight immediately. The human Warriors beside it rushed towards the hook and started hacking at the thick ropes with their swords.

But whatever the rope had been made with, it was extremely tough and resilient. The soldiers' normal swords could only leave white marks across it. They would need at least a couple more minutes to cut through it entirely.

"Let me!" Annie yelled, rushing at them.

But she quickly found that it was just the first of many hooks. Even before she started hacking, she saw another grappling hook fly up, and a Dark Elf general charging up it.

As she approached the first hook, Annie covered her dagger with Shadow Aura and slashed down on the rope.

Kishhh. The rope broke, causing the Level-4 Dark Elf General to fall back onto the ground. But he was just one of many. The other grappling hooks had all met their objectives, allowing the other fully armored Dark Elf generals to scale up the wall.

All three of them were Level-3 Warriors. Once they reached the top, they lashed out, gaining territory rapidly. Behind them, the Dark Elf Army surged on to the city walls, the Level-4 General who had fallen down earlier among them.

Annie, too, had Battle Aura and was Level-3, but she was an Assassin. She would face a real disadvantage on the battlefield, head-on with Warriors who had aggressive fighting styles.

But she was also the only Level-3 defender on the city walls. Only she stood a chance at stopping them.

Annie could only brace herself and charge towards one of the Level-3 Dark Elf generals who was massacring her city guards. In that moment, she suddenly remembered Link.

He had stayed behind to stop the Dark Elf Magician. By the time she had taken control of the city guard and returned to the little alley to help, all she found was a heavily injured Mary, Ardivan, and the other human Assassins.

The Dark Elf Magician and Dark Elf Assassins, as well as Link, were all nowhere to be seen.

As she charged forward, she recalled the last thing he said to her.

"Go, I'll stop him!" the Link shouted. And he had done it. At the last moment, he had sent her to safety.

"He should be in heaven by now, shouldn't he?" Annie sighed to herself.

She knew very well that she was no match for the Dark Elf generals. Even if she and the soldiers helping her managed to kill them, there was still the Marshal.

She would die in this battle, but she was prepared for it.

Annie slipped behind the Dark Elf general and stabbed her dagger at the back of his neck just as he swung his sword out at one of her soldiers.

Her dagger drew closer and closer towards its target. Just as it was about to hit, the Warrior swung around with his shield and charging towards Annie.

Annie knew at once that she would be flung into the air by his shield before her dagger

managed to reach him. She had no choice but to change tactics to duck and evade.

But once she did, someone leaped onto the wall behind her. It was the Level-4 Warrior from before. He had been watching for a chance to strike all this time. Sneering, he charged towards her.

"Die, little girl!"

Annie didn't stand a chance against the fully armed Level-4 Warrior.

Is this the end? Despair filled her. Father, I tried my best.

The young Magician's figure flashed through her mind once more. Are you lonely up there, all by yourself in heaven? Don't worry, I'll be there with you soon.

Activating her Shadow Aura, she charged at the Level-4 Warrior.

She'd fight to her death.

Just then, a figure cloaked in yellow light jumped out from the steps leading up to the city walls. It moved so fast it left a yellow trail and strong gust of wind in its midst. The yellow flash collided with the sneering Level-4 Dark Elf General.

Battle Skill, Charge

Bang! The Dark Elf general was caught unaware as he was flung off the city wall. He dropped a total of 50 feet, leaving him stunned as he crashed onto the ground.

The general fainted after landing with a dull thud. On the wall, the glowing figure walked up to a crossbow. Maneuvering it expertly, he shot an arrow towards the fallen elf. His aim was true—It ended the Level-4 Dark Elf in one attempt.

Only now did the glowing figure stop and turn to look at Annie. A young voice rang out, "Princess Annie, I'm here to help you."

As his voice dropped, more glowing figures leaped up onto the walls from inside the city. It was the suicide squad from the Black Iron Garrison!

The voice was familiar. Annie stared and rejoiced. "Minx, why are you here?"

Annie, being the daughter of a Duke and highly favored by King Leon, had grown up in the palace. Minx, as the son of an Earl, was a member of the Norton Kingdom's aristocracy. Once, during his travels in his younger days, he had attended a ball at the palace. He and Annie were old acquaintances.

"It's an order from Marshal Allonse. The army is on its way. I'll help you defend the city in the meantime!" Minx charged at one of the Level-3 Dark Elf generals.

His words were like a soothing balm. Hearing that aid was on its way, the morale of the human soldiers rose. With the help of the 14 Level-3 human Warriors, they managed to quickly wipe out the Dark Elves still remaining on the city walls.

...

Below the city walls.

Marshal Lorde watched the retreating elves, his face bleak.

He took a deep breath and gripped the hilt of the sword at his waist.

The sword had a name—Blood Pride. It had been made by the Dark Elf Master Blacksmith, Andrew and the Enchanter, Meissen of the Silver Moon Mage Council. It was a powerful, Epic weapon that the King himself had given to Lorde upon his rise to become a Level-6 Warrior.

As he pulled it out, a blood-red mist emanated from its blade.

"It's time!"



# Chapter 25

## The Invincible Dark Elf Marshal

A hush fell upon the elves beneath the wall. They started to retreat beyond the reach of the human archers.

After about ten minutes, Lorde stepped out from among them.

A faint, red glow emanated from the gear he wore; a similar but stronger glow shone from his weapon. The light from his weapon was so dense, it seemed that it might burst into flame at any second.

He took a few steps forward and pointed his sword at the city. His low, deep voice reverberated throughout the battlefield.

"It's time to end all this!"

Before he even finished, five Dark Elf generals stepped out from behind him, all clad in fine armor. They glowed with different colors of Battle Aura. From the luminosity of their auras, one could tell that they were all very powerful.

The vanguard of the Black Iron Garrison had already arrived. Their reinforcements would arrive soon, leaving the Dark Elf Army with little time. Lorde wasn't about to test Gladstone's strength. He would gather his forces and take the city quickly.

"Warriors, charge with me!"

Lorde shot out first, his generals quick on his heels. One followed tightly behind him while the other four spread out and attacked different parts of the city wall.

Their human counterparts were mainly Level-3 Warriors, with only one Level-4 among them. With the five of the generals attacking from five different locations, they would be unstoppable.

They were followed by countless Dark Elf Warriors.

If any of the generals gained a solid footing on the city walls, countless Dark Elf Warriors would surge up onto it, expanding their territory. Against the meager defenses of the humans, they would be able to take the city with just one breakthrough point.

On the city walls, the command had already been passed to the most powerful warrior on the human side—Minx.

His tall build and the magical glow of the Rock Armor drew eyes. He had gained standing among the human troops by striking a powerful Dark Elf general down the walls earlier.

As an Assassin, Annie had already blended into the darkness. Only in the dark, was she at her best.

Minx saw disaster when Lorde appeared.

As a major in the Black Iron Garrison, he had access to a list of the current Dark Elf generals. The one who stood before him, glowing with dark red Battle Aura, 6'2" tall and holding a blood-red broadsword, was sure to be Lorde, the youngest marshal of Pralync, the kingdom of the Dark Elves.

Lorde, widely known as the Bloody-Handed Demon, had a reputation for being cruel and ruthless. In his younger days, he had often attacked human villages, leaving only death in his wake.

Disturbingly, he not just massacred his victims, but also took joy in torturing them. Being captured by him was truly devastating.

But Lorde could afford to be as cruel as he was. A powerful Level-6 Warrior, he also held the Epic weapon, Blood Pride.

Minx was just a Level-4 Warrior. There was no way he'd hold up against Lorde!

But this was war. War didn't give anyone a chance to choose their opponents. He'd been prepared to fight to his death when he rode the griffin into Gladstone that night.

Between his thoughts, he ordered the two Level-3 Warriors beside him, "All three of us will stop him! For as long as we can!"

"Yes, General!" The two Warriors wore determined expressions. They already knew their deaths were near.

"The others, split into groups of three. One group to each Dark Elf general. Annie, support them where you can," Minx rushed, laying out his strategy as quickly as possible.

The soldiers carried out his orders immediately.

Seeing that Lorde had entered the range of their crossbows, Minx roared, "Shoot! Shoot the one holding the red sword!"

Lorde was unmistakable. The archers trained their crossbows on him. Huge bolts flew towards Lorde in the midst of loud bangs.

"What a joke!" Lorde sneered.

His voice rang loud and clear throughout the battlefield, giving the human warriors intense pressure while raising the spirits of his own army.

Lorde didn't even try to evade the huge bolts hurtling towards him. He swung his sword and faced them head-on.

Clang! Clang! Clang! The loud clashes that rang out seemed endless. With each collision, the Blood Pride which Lorde held flared up in red light, splintering the crossbow bolts in half!

Minx watched, his heart racing. Such a force was far beyond his powers.

I will probably be killed right away, Minx laughed bitterly inside.

The Dark Elf Marshal was far more powerful than Allonse from the Black Iron Garrison. He had formidable, magical weapons that Allonse lacked. He was also younger and fitter than Allonse. Minx was sure that in a one on one battle, the one who fell would certainly be Marshal Allonse.

As his opponent drew closer, he roared, "Shoot, delay him!"

The archers on the city wall shot their arrows down at Lorde. The arrows rained on him with hissing sounds, barely giving him enough room to evade.

But Lorde's defenses were incredible. Perhaps he was still wary of the crossbow bolts, but he completely disregarded the common arrows.

Casually raising a hand to block some arrows which might have posed as a threat, he allowed the rest to just land on his armor.

Ting! Clang! The arrows rained down on him in a flurry of noise. The horde of arrows left white dots on Lorde's armor, the only sign that he had just been attacked. The normal arrows were no threat to him.

Quickly, Lorde charged within 130 feet of the city. He then paused, allowing his generals behind him to take the lead.

"Go ahead, I'll catch up later!" he instructed.

He was the marshal, the leader, and soul of the army—nothing could happen to him. Attacking the city personally would be extremely risky. He needed someone to draw away the gunfire.

"Yes, Marshal!" The Dark Elf generals nodded and went on charging towards the city walls without an ounce of hesitation.

Fwoosh. Fwoosh. Fwoosh. The generals threw multiple grappling hooks up the walls. Within seconds, more than twenty sturdy ropes hung down the stone structures, allowing the Dark Elf Warriors to stream past Lorde and climb up the city walls.

The average human Warrior was relatively equal to Dark Elf Warriors in combat. Perhaps human Warriors had some advantage in terms of strength, but Dark Elves were slightly more agile. They had equal chances of victory and losing when they faced each other.

But there were too many Dark Elf Warriors on the city walls—there was even a Level-4 Dark Elf Warrior among them and a Level-6 Warrior eyeing them from below the city walls.

The human Warriors couldn't keep up. Their morale reached rock bottom and their defenses looked as if they would be breached at any second.

The Level-4 enemy Warrior was about to reach them. Minx, knowing that he was forging a path for Lorde, had no choice but to charge forth to try and stop him.

He caught sight of Annie in the shadows under the city walls.

She was no longer masked. The moment Minx saw her biting her lip, deep sorrow and regret in her dark blue eyes, the realization hit him. He knew what she was thinking.

Once he rushed to engage the Level-4 Dark Elf Warrior, the Marshal below would charge up past him. No one would be able to stop the powerful elf then.

He would massacre the human troops.

When Lorde stepped foot on the wall, Minx would surely die. The entire suicide squad would die. Annie would die. And Gladstone would fall into the enemy's hands within the blink of an eye.

Then, the residents of Gladstone—hundreds and thousands too would be massacred by that demon.

It would be the most tragic night in human history.

The situation was as clear as day to him, but he was powerless. As he rushed past Annie, he said, "Annie, run! Leave this city!"

He had watched her grow up and had always seen the proud, strong woman as a little sister. If Gladstone was doomed to fall, he would die with it.

But he hoped that Annie would live on. He hadn't thought that Annie would shake her head softly, her expression sorrowful yet determined. She had long since accepted her fate.

As Minx's shield engaged with the Dark Elf general's sword, the Dark Elf marshal's wild laughter rang out from below the city walls. "Hahahahah. Let the flowers of fresh blood bloom!

His figure blurring into a blood-red haze, he charged to the bottom of the wall and prepared to scale it.

Despair loomed over the hearts of the human warriors.

No one noticed a shadow slip into one of the archer towers stationed between the battlements. The archers were dumbfounded at the sight of a figure floating up to

them.

Luckily, the young man was a human, otherwise, they might have attacked.

"Shhh," The young man wore a smile as he indicated the archers not to shout out. A young woman, so beautiful that she didn't seem human, floated up from behind him.

The young man was Link, and the young woman none other than Celine in her human guise. Her identity being special, she wouldn't take part in the battle directly but would keep Link safe instead.

On the archer tower, Link could see the Dark Elf Marshal as he prepared to scale the walls.

Link's face stayed calm despite the raging Mana within him. The corner of his lips twitched up into a small smile as he slowly lifted his Fire Crystal Staff.

A Level-6 Warrior, eh? Why don't you have a taste of my augmented Flame Blast?!

Let the battle between magic and Battle Aura begin!

# Chapter 26

## Flame! Blast!

Lorde charged up to the bottom of the city wall. Once he did, he tugged on the rope, borrowing the momentum to leap up into the air.

Arrows rained on him and the human soldiers threw large boulders down to slow his ascent.

How annoying, Lorde thought.

He could ignore the arrows, but the boulders weighed several hundred pounds each—they were going to be a little tricky to avoid. Even he wouldn't be able to brush off an injury caused by one of those things, but he still had a way to deal with them.

When the boulder hurtled down, he swung his sword, Bloody Pride, with an angry bellow. A ray of blinding, red light, spanning a little over a foot in width shot out from his sword and flew 30 feet up to meet the huge incoming boulder. With a grating sound, the boulder, as wide as a man's waist, was sliced cleanly in half.

That wasn't all. The red light traveled up to slice the human soldiers behind the boulder in half. It traveled up to 100 feet in the air.

"He cast his aura!"

"A true master!"

"How do we block that!?"

Anguish covered many of the human soldiers' faces as they realized the inevitable outcome of the battle.

Minx was still locked in combat with one of the Dark Elf generals. His comrades tried to rush to his aid, but the surge of Dark Elves onto the city walls stood in their way, leaving Minx to fend for himself.

At the sight of the blinding red light, his heart raced. Is this the end?

Annie was helping two of their Level-3 Warriors fight against a Dark Elf General. Seeing Lorde effortlessly cast his aura, gloom and despair loomed over her once more. She attacked her opponent like a woman possessed.

She knew that they wouldn't be able to defend against the Dark Elf Marshal even with the help of the suicide squad. All they could do now was do their best to slow the pace of the Dark Elves' invasion.

The Dark Elf soldiers, however, reacted differently. The show of their Marshal's invincible strength boosted their morale, making them attack more fiercely than ever.

Up until now, everything had proceeded according to Lorde's expectations.

But then, suddenly, something happened!

A dark blue glow emanated out from a nearby archer tower.

It wasn't obvious at first, but it quickly grew brighter and brighter, almost blinding those who looked at it. In the dark of the night, it was as bright as the sun, lighting up the entire horizon.

The next instant, it shot out from the archer tower and like a bright bolt of lightning, leaving a white arc on the retinas of all who saw it.

"Huh? What was that?" Lorde asked out loud.

The attack was unexpected and came at a crucial moment, right as he was unable to release another Aura Scythe.

In the next moment, the blue orb of light slammed into him.

Boom!

Deafening explosions, blinding flashes, and the heat of blue flames reverberated throughout the skies.

The battlefield was as bright as day under the light cast off by the flames.



After seeing the terrifying attack, Lorde suspended in mid-air, went all out with his Battle Aura.

Battle Aura allowed a Warrior to have magnificent strength and agility. Though it was unable to guard well against physical attacks, it could defend against magical attacks very well.

Lorde easily protected himself against the flames, escaping the fate of being burned to ash like the other Dark Elf Warriors.

But the flames weren't all there was to be feared.

In the heat waves, Lorde felt a huge force smash into him. It was immense, far more than he could fend off. Worse, he had nowhere to run as he was still mid-air.

The shock waves from the explosion!

The spell, Flame Blast wasn't just an explosion of flames—it also carried a terrifying wave of energy.

Lorde, even with his strong physique and the strong defenses of the magic armor he wore was unable to withstand the attack. He felt the blunt force of the explosion.

In that moment, he felt sick, bloated, and nauseous, as if all his organs had all been affected.

He'd been injured!

He was flung 100 feet out and landed on the ground with a heavy thud.

Dust billowed around him. The impact of the force had left a crater in the ground where he landed.

The battle between magic and Battle Aura, between the Level-6 Warrior Lorde, and the highly amplified Level-4 Spell, Flame Blast, ended with the Dark Elf's defeat!

Why was that?

The reason was simple. In the World of Firuman, Magicians were far more powerful than Warriors!

When Magicians drew on the various types of energies in their environment, rather than using just the Mana within them, they could call on all types of creatures to their aid. Some examples were elemental magic, Soul Power for mystic magic, and summoning magic.

Flame Blast was a form of elemental magic. In the spellcasting process, the Mana first formed a framework, which drew in large amounts of fire elements that condensed into a ball of flame having an extremely high temperature.

Since the Mana was supplemented with the energy around it, the magic it formed was naturally on a much larger scale.

In contrast, Warriors could only rely on the aura within themselves.

One summoned the strength of heaven and earth while the other could only rely only on himself. Of course the former held the advantage.

If a Warrior and a Magician were to face each other head-on, the Warrior's Aura would be depleted by just a few spells, leaving the Magician with ample Mana.

Lorde, a Level-6 Warrior, defended one strike of Flame Blast with almost one-third of his aura!

Perhaps it wasn't fair. But such was life.

Magicians fought with wisdom. The spells wrought with it had always been the most formidable forces throughout the World of Firuman!

However, Lorde remained vigilant. Though he was injured, he knew that as a marshal he couldn't allow himself to show any weaknesses. He rolled to his feet immediately.

"Who is the Magician who ambushed me!?" He roared, his voice strong and firm, obviously not that of an injured man.

His pupils constricted as he took in the tragic scene on the city walls.

The Dark Elves, on the winning side earlier, had gathered more than a thousand of their troops below the city walls, leaving them all within the range of the Flame Blast's shock waves.

The normal soldiers, without the protection of an aura, were just stronger than the average person and thus defenseless in the face of the powerful Level-4 Spell.

Heat waves still rolled into the area. More than 300 corpses lay there burning, and further still were littered body parts.

Lorde, despite being strong at heart and known as the Bloody Hand for his cruelty and ruthlessness, shivered nonetheless.

He had only brought 20,000 soldiers. The death of more than 300 at once hung heavily on him.

Just then, he saw the Magician responsible for the ambush. He stood on the archer tower, still casting spells. A seemingly unending chain of bright blue small orbs of flame flew out from his staff.

Each little orb of fire burst out into flames that spanned more than a foot, and reaped the life of at least one Dark Elf Warrior.

Lorde recognized his magic staff instantly.

It's Holmes' Fire Crystal Staff—it's the young Magician who had escaped! But he's so young, how can he have such power? Lorde didn't understand.

Magicians were powerful. But that power was only gained through years and years of diligent study and practice. The powerful Magicians in the Silver Moon Mage Council in the Kingdom of Pralync all consisted of middle to old aged elves.

With the young Magician's age, the most he could have attained was that of a Level-2 Magician. Even that was a feat only possible by a prodigy among prodigies. But the range and power of the Flame Blast he had cast earlier had been horrifying. It was comparable to that of at least Level-5 magic.

How was that possible?

Even as Lorde stood there, stunned, another group of Dark Elf Warriors succumbed to the Fireballs from the Magician. Their shrill screams shook Lorde from his daze.

As he looked up at the young spellcaster sending out spells as if there was no end to his Mana, Lorde knew that he would have to kill the Magician if he were to take the

city tonight!

The Marshal's injuries had improved extremely quickly. In less than half a minute, he had recovered from most of his wounds, which weren't even that heavy in the first place. The only thing was that just slightly more than half of his Battle Aura remained. That wasn't something that he could replenish so quickly.

Still, Lorde was confident that he would be able to slay the Magician even with only half of his Battle Aura.

He had been careless earlier. This time, he wouldn't be so lax.

...

On the city wall.

Minx, with the help of Link's Fireball, finally managed to kill the Level-4 Dark Elf Warrior he had been fighting. He watched in awe, his mouth agape, as Link cast his spells confidently.

Since when did the Kingdom have such a young, powerful Magician? Minx thought to himself. The spell earlier was a Flame Blast, wasn't it? Minx wasn't too sure as it had been far more powerful than the Flame Blasts he'd seen before.

Annie saw Link as well. Her eyes reddened, full of joy and surprise at the sight of the sight of the young Magician calmly casting his spells.

The human soldiers on the wall were reinvigorated! Such earth-shattering magic from such a powerful Magician—and one of their own kind! Link had blasted the Dark Elf Marshal away like it was nothing. Finally, they stood a chance at victory!

The Dark Elves panicked, appalled by the Flame Blast that had flung their Marshal to the ground.

Many of the Dark Elves jumped down from walls in fear, despite the risk of breaking a limb. Others just turned and ran.

The only Dark Elves still standing on the city walls, were the Level-4 Dark Elf generals, and even they were scared. In a fight against magic, all of them would have to fight on the defensive side.

As he watched the morale of his Dark Elf warriors plummet, Lorde's voice once again filled the battlefield. "My Warriors, get away from the Magician. Charge separately!"

Roaring thunderously, he went full throttle with his Battle Aura. The bloody glow he wore grew brighter than ever and his speed became unmeasurable. He shot out like a red arrow towards the archer tower where Link stood.

The Magician's spells were powerful, but the power was far less condensed than his own. As long as Lorde managed to get up close to the Magician and release his aura, he would be able to take the Magician's head in one shot!

# Chapter 27

## The Break of Dawn

Link looked down from the archer tower at Lorde, who was charging towards him. Calmly, he asked Celine, "Can you stop him?"

Celine's dainty brows creased. "He's stronger than I am. I can only hold off up to three blows from his sword."

With that, Link knew that Celine was probably Level-5. It would be difficult for her to take on Lorde, who was Level-6.

Being able to fend off even three blows was probably already due to her demon blood.

He checked his Mana. Because of the rapid Mana Recovery gained by the Magical Murmurs potion, he now had 1010 MP, enough for him to use Flame Blast three more times.

His thought for a bit, then a solution came to him almost immediately.

"Holding him off once will be enough."

He turned to the archers on the tower. "Leave this place. Tell all the Warriors to get away from here!"

The Flame Blast from earlier had sealed Link's authority in stone. The archers hastened to follow his orders. Quickly, the human Warriors retreated away from the archer tower.

Lorde had already reached the bottom of the city wall. With their marshal safe and unharmed, the Dark Elf Warriors charged forward again, following Lorde's lead. However, their advance was far slower than before, carrying a sense of crippling uncertainty and fear of the terrifying display of magic.

After all, the charred bodies still flickering with flames below them whispered the awesome power of magic. They would be afraid so long as the threat of the Magician

still loomed.

What if the Magician used Flame Blast again?

Lorde charged up to one of the ropes and hastily climbed up the wall. The other Dark Elf Warriors followed suit, taking some of the pressure of the humans' attacks off their marshal. Above, the human Warriors threw boulders off the walls to stop their advance.

This time, Lorde ducked and evaded the attacks instead of using his Aura Scythe.

He'd learned his lesson earlier. He had to keep an eye out for the Magician's attacks.

As he climbed, Link quietly explained his plans to Celine. He spoke quickly, but clearly. He was evidently unfazed despite the strong enemy coming towards them.

Celine listened attentively as her eyes glowed bright. Sneaking a glance at the young man next to her, she saw a pair of black eyes, as dark as her own.

In that moment, the pair of eyes seemed deep and clear, full of a chilly glow like that of a blade in icy water. It was the glow of wisdom.

Celine's heart stirred. The plain-looking young man seemed very handsome all of a sudden.

"Do you understand?" Link asked after concluding.

"Yes," Celine nodded.

Just then, Lorde reached the top of the city walls and slayed the human Warriors around him with just a few swings of his sword. He then charged towards the archer tower.

"Lesser Hailstorm!" Link's voice was faint, as if the one charging at him was just a normal soldier and not a deadly enemy.

White light flowing out of the tip of his staff enveloped the archer tower in an icy storm.

The storm wasn't meant to injure Lorde, but rather to obscure his vision.

Lorde found that he was unable to pinpoint the Magician's location with the violent hurricane between them. He wouldn't be able to use his Aura Scythe so easily.

If his Aura Scythe didn't manage to hit the Magician, he would have used a lot of his Aura and would have to be on the defensive.

"Hm. Do you think that that can stop me?" Lorde sneered to himself.

He could take the Magician's life even without having to use his Aura Scythe. He wasn't afraid of the Magician using another Flame Blast either. This time, he'd be prepared. He'd extinguish it with a swipe of his sword once it came at him.

Lorde closed the distance between them. But the Magician hadn't made a move since casting the Lesser Hailstorm.

All the soldiers on the battlefield had their eyes on the battle between the Dark Elf Marshall and the human Magician. The pace of the battle slowed considerably because of that.

The hope that their Marshall would kill the human Magician grew in the hearts of the Dark Elf Warriors.

But the human soldiers began to worry.

Lorde was too fast. They couldn't catch up. Unable to help, they could only watch.

Minx threw sideways glances at the archers' tower as he fought a Dark Elf Warrior. The Magician's quiet ate at him.

Could he have finished his Mana? He's so young. He must have done his best to cast that Flame Blast and then run out. But he can't lose!

If the Magician died, the human troops' morale would die with him, causing their defenses to crumble and collapse!

Minx understood what was happening on the battlefield, but he was just a powerless observer.

It was painful. The sheer feeling of uselessness was overwhelming.



Annie acted immediately. Gripping her dagger, she shot out with a Speed Burst, hurtling towards the tower without paying any heed to her surroundings. Even if it bought Link just a fraction of a second, she was willing to pay for it with her life.

Her life was his. She owed it to him twice over.

But she was still too slow. The Level-6 Dark Elf Warrior, charging at full speed, was far beyond her grasp.

Within the blink of an eye, Lorde reached the archer tower. Using the momentum of his charge, he leapt up into the air, the sword he held, Bloody Pride, glowing brighter than ever.

In mid-air, he was prepared to use his Aura Scythe at any time.

Just then, Link leapt out from the Lesser Hailstorm in the opposite direction. He was as quick as a dart.

Level-1 Spell, Cat's Agility!

As he fell, Link cast another spell towards the archer tower—Vector Resistance Field!

Bang! The archer tower shook a little. The force of the rebound flung Link out and away from the tower in a wide arc.

Throughout all this, the staff he held glowed blue. He was casting another spell! This time, it was another Flame Blast.

But Lorde, in the midst of the Lesser Hailstorm, couldn't see Link. In fact, he had been attacked viciously once he reached the tower.

A glittering sword of blue crystal had stabbed at him. It was astoundingly fast. Halfway through the attack, tight-knit sparks of thunder and lightning gathered around the incoming blade.

The attack was horrifyingly powerful!

Huh. Who is this? Lorde, taken by surprise, had no choice but to bring his sword up to meet it.

Ting! An explosion erupted from the collision. Lorde felt his wrist go numb, but he managed to repel his opponent's sword. Celine was not as strong as he was.

Having had the upper hand in that exchange, Lorde finally passed through the hailstorm and onto the archer tower.

The Level-2 Lesser Hailstorm was just normal wind and frost to him—it was completely unable to breach his defenses. Its only function was to obscure his vision, which it had done.

Where is the Magician? Lorde was confused.

Only a human maiden of inhuman beauty stood there facing him. She held the sword that had stopped him earlier.

"And who are you?" Lorde asked curiously.

Celine didn't answer, but instead cast her Bloodline Talent, the Level-5 Obsidian Shield. As a type of bloodline magic, it was engraved deeply in every drop of blood that flowed within her. She cast it almost instantaneously, the strong crystal shield enveloping her within less than one-tenth of a second.

Lorde was stunned. Holding off a blow then hiding within a turtle shell? What type of combat style was this?

Throughout this exchange, a dark blue beam of light shot across the night sky, landing squarely on the archer tower.

Boom!

Another earth-shattering Flame Blast split the air.

The archer tower on the city wall was swallowed up by sparks and flames.

The fire raged, rubble shooting out of it; two figures shot out from within the chaos.

One of them was Celine. Her Obsidian Shield had protected her from most of the impact, allowing her Demon Aura to easily handle the rest. She had been prepared for the Flame Blast's explosion. She put as much distance between Lorde and herself with the momentum borrowed from the explosion.

The other figure was, naturally, Lorde.

Faced with the ambush of the Flame Blast, he had been forced to defend against it by fully unleashing his Battle Aura again, using up a large portion of his remaining power.

As he fell through the air, Lorde felt his aura plummet to less than a third of what it was before; he broke out into a cold sweat.

He would run out of aura at any moment. It wasn't enough for him to carry on his attack on the city. He would have to stop—otherwise, he might just die in Gladstone due to the depletion of his aura.

If that really happened, his name would be smeared for eternity.

As a Warrior, he could die fighting, but not a shameful death like that.

As he fell, he finally caught sight of the Magician who had vanished earlier.

Like him, the Magician was 'flying'. However, the Magician was already about to land. From the trajectory, it seemed as if the young spellcaster would land on the city walls.

The Magician was looking at him too. Those deep dark eyes unfathomable. Lorde could see no ripples or emotion within them.

A Magician with absolute calm. I never stood a chance! With that one glance, Lorde's thoughts of slaying the Magician were extinguished.

But the Magician wasn't about to just let him go.

Blue light condensed around the Magician's staff, forming a Flame Blast that shot at Lorde from more than 130 feet away.

Lorde's heart raced. The Flame Blast didn't travel in a straight line; Lorde was completely unable to predict its path.

"Damn it!"

He didn't dare use his Aura Scythe due to its high consumption of power. If he used it, he would have almost no aura left. Furthermore, if he missed, and the Magician used another Flame Blast on him, he would be in mortal danger.

He couldn't use his Aura Scythe on the Magician even if he had enough aura anyway. They were too far apart. A little over 150 feet lay between them, and the range of Lorde's Aura Scythe was only 100 feet!

Lorde was left with no choice but to brace himself against the attack.

Boom! The Flame Blast smashed into Lorde. It was as if a sun had appeared—the light of the flames lit up the entire battlefield.

Lorde's body shot out like an arrow through the waves of flame, landing heavily with a loud thud 200 feet away.

He sustained some injury with each Flame Blast he took. This time, he had used up almost all his aura. When he landed, he tasted something bitter at the back of his throat. Unable to control himself, he opened his mouth and vomited a decent amount of blood.

Dark Elf Warriors gathered around him instantly. Their faces were dark at the sight of their Marshall in such a state.

"Marshall, are you okay?" Lorde's closest aides walked up to him and helped him to his feet.

"I'm fine." Lorde stopped his aides and climbed to his feet on his own. But this time, his movements were slower and his voice weaker. His injuries weren't light.

After he stood, he looked towards the city walls of Gladstone where the Magician stood silently.

The Fire Crystal Staff he held glimmered with flames as his robes seemed to flow, glowing with the clear light of magic. The spellcaster's face was stoic and expressionless.

At that moment, the young Magician looked just like a God above the clouds!

Suddenly, deep horn blasts rang out from the northern side of Gladstone City. The sound, though bleak and desolate, pierced the hearts of the human soldiers. They rejoiced while the Dark Elves' faces filled with panic.

The humans' reinforcements were here!

At the same time, the darkest part before the dawn ended. A golden ray of light broke out from the horizon, bathing Gladstone's city walls in gold.

Dong. Dong. Dong. The bell sounded. It was five o'clock sharp in the morning.

The long night had finally ended, bringing forth a new day.

"Retreat!" Lorde cried. He heaved a long sigh, his pride replaced by a sense of deep resignation.



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